FOUND IN THE PHILIPPINES

by

Capt. Charles King U.S.A.

F. Tennyson Neely

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A WOMAN'S LETTERS.

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Author of "A Wounded Name," "Warrior Gap," "A Garrison Tangle," "An Army Wife," "Fort Frayne," "Trumpeter Fred," "Noble Blood and A West Point Parallel," etc.

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CHAPTER I.

SOMETHING unusual was going on at division headquarters. The men in the nearest regimental camps, regular and volunteer, were "lined up" along the sentry posts and silently, eagerly watching and waiting. For a week rumor had been rife that orders for a move were coming and the brigades hailed it with delight. For a month, shivering at night in the dripping, drenching fogs drifting in from the Pacific, or drilling for hours each day on the bleak slopes of the Presidio Heights, they had been praying for something to break the monotony of the routine. They were envious of the comrades who had been shipped to Manila, emulous of those who had stormed Santiago, and would have welcomed with unreasoning enthusiasm any mandate that bore promise of change of scene—or duty. The after-

noon was raw and chilly; the wet wind blew salt and strong from the westward sea, and the mist rolled in, thick and fleecy, hiding from view the familiar landmarks of the neighborhood and forcing a display of lamplights in the row of gaudy saloons across the street that bounded the camp ground toward the setting sun, though that invisible luminary was still an hour high and afternoon drill only just over.

Company after company in their campaign hats and flannel shirts, in worn blue trousers and brown canvas leggings, the men had come swinging in from the broad driveways of the beautiful park to the south and, as they passed the tents of the commanding general, even though they kept their heads erect and noses to the front, their wary eyes glanced quickly at the unusual array of saddled horses, of carriages and Concord wagons halted along the curbstone, and noted the number of officers grouped about the gate. Ponchos and overcoat capes were much in evidence on every side as the men broke ranks, scattered to their tents to stow away their dripping arms and belts, and

then came streaming out to stare, unrebuked, at headquarters. It was still early in the war days, and, among the volunteers and, indeed, among regiments of the regulars whose ranks were sprinkled with college men who had rubbed shoulders but a few months earlier with certain subalterns, the military line of demarcation was a dead letter when "the boys" were out of sight and hearing of their seniors, and so it happened that when a young officer came hurrying down the pathway that led from the tents of the general to those of the field officers of the Tenth California, he was hailed by more than one group of regulars along whose lines he passed, and, as a rule, the query took the terse, soldierly form of "What's up, Billy?"

The lieutenant nodded affably to several of his fellows of the football field, but his hand crept out from underneath the shrouding cape, palm down, signalling caution. "Orders—some kind," he answered in tones just loud enough to be heard by those nearest him. "Seen the old man anywhere? The general wants him," and, never halting for reply the youngster hurried on.

He was a bright, cheery, brave-eyed lad of twenty who six months earlier was stumbling through the sciences at the great university on the heights beyond the glorious bay, never dreaming of deadlier battle than that in which his pet eleven grappled with the striped team of a rival college. All on a sudden, to the amaze of the elders of the great republic, the tenets and traditions of the past were thrown to the winds and the "Hermit Nation" leaped the seas and flew at the strongholds of the Spanish colonies. Volunteers sprang up by the hundred thousand and a reluctant Congress accorded a meagre addition to the regular army. Many a college athlete joined the ranks, while a limited few, gifted with relatives who had both push and "pull," were permitted to pass a not very exacting examination and join the permanent establishment as second lieutenants forthwith. Counting those commissioned in the regular artillery and infantry, there must have been a dozen in the thronging camps back of the great city, and of these dozen, Billy Gray—"Belligerent Billy," as a

tutor dubbed him when the war and Billy broke out together—the latter to the extent of a four-day's absence from all collegiate duty—was easily the gem of the lot. One of the "brightest minds" in his class he was one of the laziest; one of the quickest and most agile when aroused, he was one of the torpids as a rule: One of the kind who should have "gone in for honors," as the faculty said, he came nearer going out for devilment. The only son of a retired colonel of the army who had made California his home, Billy had spent years in camp and field and saddle and knew the West as he could never hope to know Haswell. The only natural soldier of his class when, sorely against the will of most, they entered the student battalion, he promptly won the highest chevrons that could be given in the sophomore year, and, almost as promptly, lost them for "lates" and absences. When the 'Varsity was challenged by a neighboring institute to a competitive drill the "scouts" of the former reported that the crack company of the San Pedros had the snappiest captain they ever saw, and that, with far

better material to choose from, and more of it, the 'Varsity wouldn't stand a ghost of a show in the eyes of the professional judges unless Billy would "brace up" and "take hold." Billy was willing as Barkis, but the faculty said it would put a premium on laxity to make Billy a 'Varsity captain even though the present incumbents were ready, any of them, to resign in his favor. "Prex" said No in no uncertain terms; the challenge was declined, whereat the institute crowed lustily and the thing got into the rival papers. As a result a select company of student volunteers was formed: its members agreed to drill an hour daily in addition to the prescribed work, provided Billy would "take hold" in earnest, and this was the company that, under his command, swept the boards six weeks later and left San Pedro's contingent an amazed and disgusted crowd. Then Billy went to metaphorical pieces again until the war clouds overspread the land; then like his father's son he girded up his loins, went in for a commission and won. And here he was a "sub" in Uncle Sam's stalwart infantry with

three classmates serving under him in the ranks and half a dozen more, either as junior officers or enlisted men, in the camps of the volunteers. He was a handsome boy, a healthy, hearty boy, and, as boys go, rather a good boy —a boy in whom his mother would have found, had she not long since been lifted above the cares of this world, much of comfort and more to condone, but a boy, nevertheless, who had given his old dragoon of a dad many an anxious hour. Now, just as he neared the legal dividing line between youth and years of discretion, Billy Gray had joined the third battalion of his regiment, full of pluck, hope and health, full of ambition to make a name for himself in a profession he loved as, except his father, he certainly loved nothing else, and utterly scoffing the idea that there might come into his life a being for the sake of whose smile he could almost lay down his sword, for he had yet to meet Amy Lawrence.

"Who are the women folks up at headquarters, Billy?" asked a youth of his own years and rank, peering eagerly through the drifting

mist at the dim, ghostly outlines of the general's camp.

"Didn't get to see 'em. Where's the old man—the colonel?" was the reply. "Chief wants him toot de sweet!"

"What's wanted?" called a voice from the biggest of the neighboring tents, and a close-cropped head was thrust out between the front tent flaps. "That you, Billy? Who wants the colonel? He and the 'brig' rode over to the Presidio an hour ago—ain't got back. Come in; I've started a fire in our oil stove." A puff of warm air blew from the interior and confirmed the statement. It was well along in summer and, not a dozen miles away to the east, men were strolling about with palm-leaf fans and wilted collars. Here, close to the gray shores of the mighty sea, blankets and overcoats were in demand. Hospitably the older officer tugged at the lacings of the military front door, swore between his set teeth when the knots, swollen by the wet, withstood his efforts and then shouted:

"Sergeant-major; send somebody here to open this."

A light footstep sounded on the springy board floor, nimble fingers worked a moment at the cords, then the flap was thrown open and the adjutant's office stood partially revealed. It was a big wall tent backed up against another of the same size and pattern. Half a dozen plain chairs, two rough board tables littered with books, papers and smoking tobacco, an oil stove and a cheap clothes rack on which where hanging raincoats, ponchos and a cape or two, comprised all the furniture. In a stout frame of unplaned wood, cased in their oilskins and tightly rolled, stood the colors of the famous regiment; and back of them, well within the second tent where one clerk was just lighting a camp lantern, were perched on rough tables a brace of field desks with the regimental books. The sergeant-major, a veteran of years of service in the regulars, sat at one of them. A young soldier, he who had unfastened the tent flap to admit Lieutenant Gray, was just returning to his seat at the other. Two orderlies lounged on a bench well beyond and back of the sergeant-major's

seat, and a bugler, with his hands in his pockets, was smoking a short brier-root pipe at the opposite or back doorway. Woe to the enlisted men who sought the presence of the colonel or adjutant through any other channel. The sergeant-major would drop on him with the force of a baseball bat.

"Who all are over yahnduh at the chief's?" asked the adjutant, as soon as he had his visitor well inside, and the soft accent as well as the quaint phraseology told that in the colonel's confidential staff officer a Southerner spoke.

"All the brigade and most regimental commanders 'cept ours, I should say, and they seem to be waiting for them. Can't we send?" was the answer, as the junior whipped off his campaign hat and sprinkled the floor with the vigorous shakes he gave the battered felt.

"Have sent," said his entertainer briefly, as he filled a pipe from the open tobacco box and struck a safety match. "Orderly galloped after him ten minutes ago. Blow the brigade and battalion commanders! What I asked you was who are the women up there?"

"No, you didn't! You said,'who all are up yonder?' I'm a sub, and s'posed you meant *men*—soldiers—officers. What have I to do with anybody in petticoats?"

"And I'm a grizzled vet of a dozen years' duty, crows' feet and gray hairs a-comin'," grinned the adjutant, pulling at a long curly mustache and drawing himself up to his full height of six feet, "and when you're as old as I am and half as wise, Billy, you'll know that a pretty girl is worth ten times the thought our old frumps of generals demand. My name ain't Gordon if I haven't a mind to waltz over there through the mist and the wind just to tell them I've sent for Squeers. Then I'll get a look at the girls."

"I've got to go back," said Billy, "and you've no business to—with Mrs. Gordon and an interesting family to consider. What tent'd the ladies go to? *I* didn't see 'em."

"Mrs. Gordon, suh," said the adjutant, with placid superiority, "considers it a reflection on her sex when I fail to pay it due homage. Of course you didn't see the ladies. The party

was shown into the general's own domicile. Couldn't you see how many young fellows were posing in picturesque attitudes in front of it? Awe Hank!" he suddenly shouted to an officer striding past the tent in dripping mackintosh. "Goin' up to division headquarters? Just tell the staff or the chief I've sent an orderly galloping after Squeers. He's halfway to the Presidio now, but it'll be an hour before they can get back." The silent officer nodded and went on, whereat Gordon made a spring for the entrance and hailed again.

"Say, Hank! Who are the damsels?"

The answer came back through the fog:

"People from the East—looking for a runaway. Old gent, pretty daughter, and pretty daughter's prettier cousin. Heard the orders?"

"Damn the orders! They don't touch *us*. Where do they come from?"

"D'rect from Washington, they say. Three regiments to sail at once, and——"

"Oh, I know all that!" shouted Gordon impatiently. "It was all over camp an hour ago! Where do they—the girls—come from? What's their name?"

"Wasn't presented," was the sulky reply. "Let a lot of stuffy old women show up in search of long-lost sons and those fellows at headquarters unload them on us in less than no time, but a brace of pretty girls—! Why, they double the gate guards so that no outsider can so much as see them. Billy, here, knows 'em. Ask him."

By this time the youngster had ranged up alongside the adjutant and was laughingly enjoying the latest arrival's tirade at the expense of the headquarters' staff, but at his closing words Lieutenant Billy's grin of amusement suddenly left his face, giving way to a look of blank amaze.

"*I* know 'em! I haven't been east of the Big Muddy since I was a kid."

"They asked for you all the same, just after you started. 'Least one of 'em did—for What's-his-name?—the chief's military legal adviser, came out bareheaded and called after you, but you were out of hearing. He said the cousin, the prettiest one, recognized you as you skipped away from the general's tent and pointed you

out to her friend. Somebody explained you were running an errand for one of those aides too lazy to go himself, and that you'd be back presently."

"Then go at once, young man," said the adjutant, laying a mighty hand on the junior's square shoulder. "Stand not upon the order of your going, but git! Never you mind about the colonel. He won't be *here* until after he's been *there*, and he's in for a rasping over this morning's inspection. Just look at the report. Sergeant-major, send me Colonel Colt's report!" he called aloud, tossing his head back as he spoke. "Come in, Parson; come out of the wet." And, eager enough to read a famous inspector's criticisms of the appearance of the regiment, the officer addressed as Parson shoved briskly into the tent.

The young soldier who had opened the tent flap a few minutes before came forward with a folded paper which, in silence, he handed the adjutant and turned back to his desk. Mr. Gordon took the paper, but his eyes followed the soldier. Then he called, somewhat sharply:

"Morton!"

The young fellow stopped at the dividing crack between the two tent floors, and slowly faced the three officers. He was slender, well built, erect. His uniform fitted him trimly, and was worn with easy grace, his hands and feet were small and slender, his eyes and hair dark and fine, his features delicate and clear cut, his complexion a trifle blistered and beaten by the harsh winds that whistled in every day from the sea, and, as he turned, all three officers were struck by its extreme pallor.

"You're sick again, Morton," said the adjutant somewhat sternly. "I thought I told you to see Dr. Heffernan. Have you done so?"

"I—wasn't sick enough," faltered the young soldier. "I was all right a minute or two—or rather this morning, sir. It'll be over presently. Perhaps it was the smell of the oil that did it—the stove is close to my desk."

But Gordon continued to look at him doubtfully.

"Move your desk across the tent for the present, anyhow," said he, "and I'll speak to the

doctor myself. With all this newspaper hullabaloo about our neglect of the sick," continued he, turning to his friends, "if a man changes color at sight of a smash-up he must be turned over to the Red Cross at once. What is it, orderly?" he finished suddenly, as the tent flaps parted and a soldier in complete uniform, girt with his belt of glistening cartridges, stood at salute, some visiting cards in his gloved hand.

"Lieutenant Gray here, sir?" was the comprehensive answer. Then, catching sight of the young officer who stepped quickly forward, he held forth the cards.

"The adjutant-general's compliments, sir, and he'd be glad if the lieutenant would come over at once."

Gray took the cards, curiously studied them and then read aloud, one after the other, and placing the topmost underneath the other two as soon as read.

"Mr. Lispenard Prime."
"Miss Prime."
"Miss Amy Lawrence."

It was the last name that lay uppermost at the end, receiving particular attention, and the Parson noted it.

"That's the pretty cousin, Billy," quoth he. "Case of the last shall be first, don't you see? Scoot now, you lucky boy, and tell us all about it later."

But Gray was still gazing dreamily at the cards.

"I'm sure I never met any of them before in my life," said he. "There must be some mistake. Yet—that name—sounds familiar—somehow," and "that" was the only name now in sight. "I'm off," he suddenly announced, and vanished.

There was a sound of light, quick footsteps on the flooring of the rearward tent at the same time. The sergeant-major glanced up from his writing; looked at a vacant desk, then at the clock, then, inquiringly, at his regimental deity—the adjutant. It was just the hour of the day at which all manner of papers were coming down from division and brigade headquarters to be duly stamped, noted and

stacked up for the colonel's action. This was the young clerk Morton's especial function, but Morton had left the office and was gone.

CHAPTER II.

THE little party of visitors in the general's personal tent made a striking contrast to that assembled under the official canvas. In the latter, seated on camp stools and candle boxes or braced against the tent poles were nearly a dozen officers, all in the sombre dark blue regulation uniform, several in riding boots and spurs, some even wearing the heavy, frogged overcoat; all but two, juniors of the staff, men who stood on the shady side of forty, four of the number wearing on their shoulders the silver stars of generals of division or brigade, and among their thinning crops of hair the silver strands that told of years of service. One man alone, the commanding general, was speaking; all the others listened in respectful silence. In the gloom of that late, fog-shrouded afternoon a lantern or two would have been welcome, but the conference had begun while it was still

light enough for the chief to read the memoanda on his desk, and now he was talking without notes. In the array of grave, thoughtful faces, some actually somber and severe in expression, a smile would have seemed out of place, yet, all on a sudden, grim features relaxed, deep-set eyes twinkled and glanced quickly about in search of kindred sympathetic spirits, and more than half the bearded faces broadened into a grin of merriment and as many heads were suddenly uplifted, for just as the gray-haired chief ended an impressive period with the words: "It will be no laughing matter if I can lay hold of them," there burst upon the surprised ears of the group a peal of the merriest laughter imaginable—the rippling, joyous, musical laughter of happy girlhood mingling with the hearty, wholesome, if somewhat boyish, outburst of jollity, of healthful youth.

"Merciful powers!" exclaimed the chief. "I had forgotten all about those people. They must have been here twenty minutes."

"Sixty-five, sir, by the watch," said a satur-

nine-looking soldier, tall and stalwart, and wearing the shield of the adjutant-general's department on the collar of his sack coat.

"They ought to go, then," was the placid suggestion of a third officer, a man with keen eyes, thin, almost ascetic, face, but there twitched a quaint humor about the lines of his lips. "That visit's past the retiring age."

And then another peal of merriment from the adjoining tent put stop to conversation.

"They don't lack for entertainers," hazarded a staff officer as soon as he could make himself heard. "The solemn-looking Gothamite who came with them must have slipped out."

"It seems he knows Colonel Armsrong," said the chief thoughtfully. "I sent for him an hour ago, and he may be piloting Mr. Prime around camp, looking up the runaway."

"Another case?" asked a brigade commander with a shrug of his shoulders.

"Another case," answered the general, with a sigh. "It isn't always home troubles that drive them to it. This boy had everything a doting father could give him. What on earth could make *him* bolt and enlist for the war?"

No one answered for a moment. Then the officer with the humorous twinkle about the eyes and the twitch at the lip corners, bent forward, placed his elbows on his knees, his fingers tip to tip, gazed dreamily at the floor, and sententiously said:

"Girl."

Whereupon his next neighbor, a stocky, thickset man in the uniform of a brigadier, never moving eye, head or hand, managed to bring a sizable foot in heavy riding boot almost savagely upon the slim gaiter of the humorist, who suddenly started and flushed to the temples, glanced quickly at the chief, and then as quickly back to the floor, his blue eyes clouded in genuine distress.

The general's gray face had seemed to grow grayer in the gloom. Again there came, like a rippling echo, the chorus of merry laughter from the adjoining tent, only it seemed a trifle subdued, possibly as though one or two of the merry-makers had joined less heartily. With sudden movement the general rose: "Well, I've kept you long enough," he said. "Let the three

regiments be got in readiness at once, but relax no effort in—that other matter. Find the guilty parties if a possible thing."

And then the group dissolved. One or two of the number looked back, half-hesitating, at the entrance of the tent, but the chief had turned again to the littered table before him, and seating himself, rested his gray head in the hand nearest his visitors. It was as though he wished to conceal his face. One of the last to go—the thin-faced soldier with the twinkling blue eyes, hung irresolutely behind the chief a moment as though he had it in his mind to speak, then turned and fairly tiptoed out, leaving the camp commander to the society of a single staff officer, and to the gathering darkness.

"Kindly say to Mr. Prime, or his friends, that I will join them in a moment," said the former, presently, without so much as uplifting head or eye, and the aide-de-camp left as noiselessly as his predecessor, the humorist. But when he was gone and "The Chief" sat alone, the sound of merry chat and laughter still drifted in with the mist at the half-opened

entrance. Shadowy forms flitted to and fro between the official tent and the lights beginning to twinkle at brigade headquarters across the wide roadway. An orderly scratched at the tent flap, but got no answer. The lone occupant sat well back in the gloomy interior and could barely be distinguished. The waiting soldier hesitated a moment, then entered and stamped once upon the wooden floor, then turned and noiselessly stepped out, for, anticipating his question, the general spoke:

"No light just yet, orderly. I'll call you—in a moment. Just close the tent."

At his hand, he needed no light to find it, lay a little packet that had been passed in to him with the mail while the council was still in session. It was stoutly wrapped, tightly corded, and profusely sealed, but with the sharp point of an eraser the general slit the fastenings, tore off the wrapper, and felt rather than saw, that a bundle of letters, rolled in tissue paper and tied with ribbon, ribbon long since faded and wrinkled, lay within. This he carefully placed in a large-sized military letter

envelope, moistened and pressed tight the gummed flap, stowed it in the inner pocket of the overcoat that hung at the rear tent pole, reduced the wrapper and its superscription to minute fragments, and dropped them into the waste-basket, all as carefully and methodically as though life knew neither hurry nor worry; then bowed his lined face in both hands a moment in utter silence and in unmistakable sadness. Presently his lips moved: "Can you look down and see that I have kept my word, Agnes?" he murmured. "God help me to find him and save him—yet."

Once again the laughter, the gay young voices, rang from the other tent. All over camp, far and near, from the limits of the park to the very slope of the height at the north, the evening bugles were calling by thousands the thronging soldiery to mess or roll call. Slowly the General rose, drew on his overcoat, and in another moment, under the sloping visor of his forage-cap, with eyes that twinkled behind their glasss, with a genial smile softening every feature, his fine soldierly face peered in on the

scene of light, of merriment and laughter under the canvas roof of the only home he knew in the world—the soldier home of one whose life had been spent following the flag through bivouac, camp or garrison, through many a march, battle and campaign all over the broad lands of the United States until now, at the hour when most men turned for the placid joys of the fireside, the love of devoted and faithful wife, the homage and affection of children, the prattle and playful sports of children's children—homeless, wifeless, childless he stood at the border of the boundless sea, soldier duty pointing the way to far distant, unknown and undesired regions, content to follow that flag to the end of the world, if need be, and owning no higher hope or ambition than to uphold it to the end of his life.

There was nothing in such a face as his to put a check to fun and merriment, yet, all on a sudden, the laughter died away. Three young gallants in soldier garb sprang to their feet and faced him with appeal and explanation in their speaking eyes, although only one of their num-

ber found his tongue in time to put the matter into words. There were only two girls when the general left that tent to meet his officers at four o'clock, and now there were four, and the four were having five-o'clock tea.

At least any one would have said they were four blithe girls, innocent of graver responsibilities than social calls and dinner or dance engagements, for never looked four young women so free from the cares of this world as did those who were picturesquely grouped about the General's camp table and under the brilliant reflector of the General's lamp, but the plain gold circlet on the slender finger of the merriest and noisiest and smallest of the four, and the fact that she had nothing to say to the elder of the three attendant officers except in the brief, indifferent tones of assured proprietorship, and very much to say to the others, told a different story. The General's manner lost none of its kindness, even though a close observer would have seen that his face lost a little of its light as he recognized in the evident leader of the revels and mistress of the situation the wife

of his senior aide-de-camp. An hour before he thought her a thousand miles away—and so did her husband.

"Bless your dear old heart!" exclaimed the little lady, springing to her feet, facing him with indomitable smiles and thrusting forward two slender, white, bejeweled hands. "No—don't say you disapprove! Don't scold! Don't do anything but sit right down here and have a cup of your own delicious tea—(Frank, some boiling water)—that no one makes for you as I do—you've owned it many a time. And then we're all going in to the Palace for dinner and then to the theatre, and I'll tell you all about it between the courses or between the acts. Oh, you poor dear! I ought to have come before—you've been working yourself to death!"

And by this time, resolutely pulling, she had towed the General to a chair, and into this, his favorite leather-armed, canvas-backed, hickory-framed companion of many a year, she deftly dropped him and then, giving him no chance for a word, gayly pirouetting, she seized one after another upon each member of the party

present—an accomplished little mistress of ceremonies encased in a tailor-made traveling suit that rendered her proof against a dozen minor ills, so beautifully was it cut and fitted to her pretty figure—and, with inexhaustible flow of merry words, presented her or him to the veteran in the chair:

"This, my honored General, first and foremost, is Miss Mildred Prime, daughter of a thousand earls is she, yet one *vastly* to be desired, though I say it who should not, for she hails from New York, which is enough to make me hate her, whereas we've just sworn an eternal friendship. You've only casually met her and her folks before, but *I* can tell you all about them. You should have put Frank at the head of your Intelligence Bureau, General. *He'd* never find out anything, but *I* would. We came on the same train together all the way from Ogden."

A tall, dark-eyed, dark-haired, oval-faced girl, coloring slightly in evident embarassment over these odd army ways, courtesied smilingly to the General and seemed to be pleading

dumbly for clemency if there had been transgression.

"This," hurried on the voluble little woman, seizing another feminine wrist, "is Miss Cherry Langton—Cherry Ripe we call her at home this summer, the dearest girl that ever lived except myself, and one you'll simply delight in—as you do in me—when you get to know her. She is, as you have often been told and have probably forgotten, the only good-looking member of Frank's family—his first cousin. She was moping her heart out after all the nice young men in Denver went to the wars, and withering on the stem until I told her she should go too, when she blossomed and blushed with joy as you see her now, sir. Cherry, make your manners." Cherry, whose name well described her, was only waiting for a chance, laughing the while at the merry flow of her chaperon's words, and, at the first break, stepped quickly forward and placed her hand frankly in the outstretched palm of her host, then glanced eagerly over her shoulder as though she would say: "But you must see *her*," and her bright

eyes sought and found the fourth feminine member of the group.

"And this," said Mrs. Frank Garrison, bravely, yet with a trifle less confidence of manner, with indeed a faint symptom of hesitancy, "is Miss Amy Lawrence," and in extending her little hand to take that of the most retiring of the three girls, only the finger tips and thumb seemed to touch. Miss Lawrence came quickly forward, and waiting for no description, bowed with quiet grace and dignity to the chief and, smiling a bit gravely, said:

"Uncle left word that he would soon return, General, but he has been gone with Colonel Armstrong nearly an hour. I hope we have not taken too great a liberty," and her glance turned to the substantial tea service on the rude camp table.

"Oh, *I'm* responsible for that—and for any and every iniquity here committed, solely because I know our General too well to believe he would allow famishing damsels to faint for lack of sustenance." It was Mrs. Garrison, of

course, who spoke. "I simply set Frank and his fellows to work, with the result that tea and biscuit, light and warmth, mirth and merriment, faith, hope and charity sprang up like magic in this gloomy old tent, and here we are still. Now, say you're glad I came, General, for these stupid boys—Oh! I quite forgot! Let me present the slaves of the lamp—the spirit lamp, General. Frank you know—too well, I dare say. Stand forth, vassal Number Two. This, General, is Captain Schuyler, a mite of a man physically—a Gothamite, in fact—but a tower of wit and wisdom when permitted to speak." (A diminutive youngster, with a head twice too big for his body, and a world of fun in his sparkling eyes, bowed elaborately to his commanding general, but prudently held his peace.) "Captain Schuyler, my dear General, meekly bears the crescent of the subsistence department on his beautifully high and unquestionably New York-made collars. He hasn't an idea on the subject of supplies except that commissary cigars are bad, but his senator said he had to have something and that's what he

got. He'd rather be second lieutenant of regular infantry any day, but that was too high for him. *Here's* a youth it fits to a 't'—Mr. William Gray of the —teenth Foot, whom I knew years ago when we were kids in the same camp, and whose best claim to your notice is that you knew his father. He says so, and hopes you'll forgive all his budding iniquities on the strength of it." The General nodded with a grin at the youngster who stood at Miss Lawrence's left, and then held up his hand for silence, shutting off further presentations.

"I'll forgive anything but more chatter," said he, with a placid smile, "provided you give me some tea at once. Then I should be glad to know how you all happened to meet here."

"My doing entirely, General. (Frank, another cup—quick!) Cherry came with me to surprise my husband—an easy thing to do—I'm always doing it. We found him here, by your orders, striving to entertain these two charming damsels—the last thing on earth he is capable of doing, however valuable he may be with orders

and correspondence. *I* heard Mr. Prime's story and at once suggested Colonel Armstrong. *I* heard Miss Lawrence exclaim at sight of Billy here, and saw a case of old acquaintance and sent for him forthwith. So easy to say: 'The adjutant-general's compliments'—*I* found that, after all, they had never met, but Miss Lawrence had seen him at the head of some famous student company. *I* it was who presented him to her, and summoned Captain Schuyler to meet once more his fellow-citizens, the Primes. *I* it was who ordered lamps, fire and the tea things. *I* am the good fairy who wrought the transformation. Behold me with my wand!"

She seized Miss Langton's slender umbrella and, waving it over her curly little head, pirouetted again in triumphant gayety.

The General was thoughtfully sipping his tea and studying her as she chattered and danced. When she paused a moment for breath he again held up his hand.

"Colonel Armstrong went with Mr. Prime, did he?"

"With every assurance that the prodigal

should be produced forthwith and restored to the paternal bosom," declaimed Mrs. Garrison melodramatically, and would have ranted on, never noting the flush of pain and embarrassment that almost instantly appeared in the faces of Miss Lawrence and her dark-eyed Eastern cousin, nor seeing the warning in her husband's eyes, but at the moment the tent flap was thrown back and held open to admit a tall, gray-haired civilian whose silk hat was uplifted as he entered, in courteous recognition of the group, despite the distress that was betrayed in the pallor of his face and the instant glance of his dark eyes toward the slender girl, who stepped eagerly forward. Mrs. Garrison, turning quickly, saw, and with swift, agile movement, sprang to one side. The General slowly struggled up from his easy-chair. Reaching her father's side, Miss Prime laid her hand upon his arm, looking fondly and anxiously into his face.

A soldierly, middle-aged officer, in dripping forage cap and rain coat, stepped quickly in and lowered the flap.

"Did you find him, father?" was Miss Prime's low-toned, faltering question.

"We found—the soldier referred to; Colonel Armstrong has been most kind; but—it wasn't your brother at all, my child."

CHAPTER III.

A DAY had dawned on the Presidio Heights as brilliant as its predecessor had been dismal. A soft south wind had swept the fogs of the Pacific far out to sea and cleared the summer sky of every wisp of vapor. The sun of early August shone hot and strong upon the sandy wastes between the westward limits of the division camps and the foamy strand beneath the low bluffs, and beat upon the canvas homes of the rejoicing soldiery, slacking cloth and cordage so that the trim tent lines had become broken and jagged, thereby setting the teeth of "Old Squeers" on edge, as he gazed grimly from under the brim of his unsightly felt hat and called for his one faithful henchman, the orderly. Even his adjutant could not condone the regimental commander's objectionable traits, for a crustier old villain of a veteran lived not in the line of the army. "Ould

Canker" the troopers had dubbed him during the few years he had served in the cavalry, transplanted from a foot regiment at the time of the reorganization, so-called, of the army in '71; but a few years of mounted duty in Arizona and later in the Sioux country had sickened him of cavalry life and he gladly accepted a chance to transfer back to the infantry. Now, twenty years after, risen by degrees to the grade of lieutenant-colonel, he found himself in command of a famous old regiment of regulars, whose colonel had donned the stars of a general officer of volunteers, and the pet name—save the mark—of cavalry days had given place to the unflattering *sobriquet* derived from that horror of boyish readers—the ill-favored schoolmaster of Dotheboys Hall. He had come to the —teenth with a halo of condemnation from the regiment in which he had served as major and won his baleful name, and "the boys" of his new command soon learned to like him even less than those who had dubbed him "Squeers," because, as they explained, there wasn't any privilege or pleas-

ure he would not "do the boys" out of if he possibly could. Gordon had promptly tendered his resignation as regimental adjutant when his beloved colonel left the post to report for duty in the army destined for Cuba, but Lieutenant-Colonel Canker declined to accept it, and fairly told Gordon that, as he hadn't a friend among the subalterns, there was no one else to take it. Then, too, the colonel himself wrote a word or two and settled the matter.

A big review had been ordered for the morning. An entire brigade of sturdy volunteers was already forming and marching out by battalions to their regimental parades, the men showing in their easy stride and elastic carriage the effects of two months' hard drill and gradually increasing discipline. The regulars were still out in the park, hidden by the dense foliage and busy with their company drills. The adjutant and clerk were at their papers in the big office tent, and only the sentries, the sick and the special duty men remained about the body of camp. There was no one, said Private Noonan to himself, as he paced the pathway in

front of the colonel's tent, after having scrupulously saluted him on his appearance, "No wan fur the ould man to whack at, barrin' it's me," but even Canker could find nothing to "whack at" in this veteran soldier who had served in the ranks since the days of the great war and had borne the messages of such men as Sheridan, Thomas and McPherson when Canker himself was sweating under his knapsack and musket. Like most men, even most objectionable men, Canker had some redeeming features, and that was one of them—he had been a private soldier, and a brave one, too, and was proud of it.

But life had little sunshine in it for one of his warped, ill-conditioned nature. There was a profound conviction in the minds of the company officers that the mere sight of happiness or content in the face of a subordinate was more than enough to set Canker's wits to work to wipe it out. There was no doubt whatever in the minds of the subalterns that the main reason why Squeers was so manifestly "down on" Billy Gray was the almost indestructible

expression of good nature, jollity and enthusiasm that had shown in the little fellow's face ever since he joined the regiment. "If we call the old man Squeers we should dub Billy Mark Tapley," said Gordon one day, when the lad had laughed off the effect of an unusually acrimonious rasping over a trivial error in the Guard Report book. "He's no end kind when a fellow's in a fix," said Gray, in explanation, "and all the time he was soaking me I was thinking how he stood by Jimmy Carson in *his* scrape"—a serious scrape it was, too, for young Carson, detailed to escort certain prisoners to Alcatraz and intrusted with certain funds to be turned over to the chief quartermaster of the department, had unaccountably fallen into a deep sleep aboard the train and awoke to find both funds and prisoners gone. Explanations were useless. The commanding general would listen to no excuse; a court-martial was ordered, and a very worthy young officer's military career seemed about to close under a cloud, when "Old Canker" threw himself into the breach. He had long suspected the sergeant

who had accompanied the party in immediate command of the little guard. He hated the commanding general with all his soul, and, how it came about no one could thoroughly explain, but one day Canker turned up with indubitable proof that the sergeant was the thief—that he was bribed to bring about the escape of the prisoners, and that he had drugged the fresh spring water he brought in to the young officer after the burning heat of the desert was left behind in the dead of the summer night. Canker even recovered most of the stolen money, for there was a woman in the case, and she had safely stowed it away. Carson was cleared and Canker triumphant. "See what the man can do when his sense of justice is aroused," said the optimists of the army. "Justice be blowed," answered the cynics. "He never would have raised his finger to help Carson but for the joy of proving the General unjust, and a regimental pet—the sergeant—a thief."

Yet Gray reverted to this episode as explanation of his tolerance of Canker's harshness and

thereby gave rise to a rejoinder from the lips of a veteran company commander that many a fellow was destined to recall before the regiment was two months older:

"In order to settle it, somebody's got to find his life or his commission in jeopardy. Maybe it'll be you, Billy, and I'm betting *you* won't find Squeers a guardian angel."

Yet on this sunshiny summer morning, with hope and sunshine and confidence in his handsome, boyish face, Lieutenant Gray came bounding up to the presence of the regimental commander as though that sour-visaged soldier were an indulgent uncle who could not say him nay. A stylish open carriage in which were seated two remarkably pretty girls and a gray-haired, slender gentleman, had reined up in the street opposite the entrance to the row of officers' tents and Canker had ripped out his watch, with an ugly frown on his forehead, for three of his companies had just marched in from drill, and three of their young lieutenants, on the instant of dismissal, had made straight for the vehicle and he half-hoped to find they

had lopped off a minute or so of the allotted hour. The sound of merry laughter seemed to grate on his ears. The sight of Gray's beaming face seemed to deepen the gloom in his own. Instinctively he knew the youngster had come to ask a favor and he stood ready to refuse.

"Colonel, I'd like mightily to go over and see that review this morning, sir; and Mr. Prime is good enough to offer me a seat in his carriage. May I go, sir?"

"You can't go anywhere, sir, with the tents of your company in that disgraceful condition. Just look at them, sir,—as ragged as a wash line on a windy day!" And Canker scowled angrily at the young fellow standing squarely at attention before him.

"I know that, colonel, but the sun did that while we were out at drill, and the men will straighten everything in ten minutes. I'll give the order now, sir." And Billy looked as though refusal were out of the question.

"You'll stay and see it done, sir, and *when* it's done—to my satisfaction—will be time enough to ask for favors. Mr. Gordon, send

word to the company commanders I wish to see them here at once," continued the senior officer, whirling on his heel and terminating the interview by so doing. It was in Gray's mind for a brief minute to follow and plead. He had made it tell many a time with an obstinate university Don, but he knew the carriage was waiting—the carriage load watching, and deep down in his heart there was keen disappointment. He would have given a big slice of his monthly pay to go with that particular party, occupy the seat opposite Amy Lawrence and gaze his fill at her fair face. He well-nigh hated Squeers as he hurried away to hail his first sergeant and give the necessary orders before daring to return to the carriage and report his failure. His bright blue eyes were clouded and his face flushed with vexation, for he saw that the rearmost regiment was even now filing into the Presidio Reservation afar off to the north, and that no time was to be lost if his friends were to see the review. The distant measured boom of guns told that the General in whose honor the ceremony was ordered was already approach-

ing the appointed spot, and away over the rolling uplands toward the Golden Gate a cavalry escort rode into view. Billy ground his teeth. "Run and tell them I cannot get leave," he called to a fellow sub. "Squeers has set me to work straightening up camp. Turn out the company, sergeant! Brace the tent cords and align tents," and a mournful wave of his forage cap was the only greeting he dare trust himself to give, as after a few minutes of fruitless waiting the vacant seat was given to another officer and the carriage rolled rapidly away. A second or two it was hidden from his sight behind the large wall tents along the line of fence, then shot into full view again as he stood at the end of the company street looking eagerly for its reappearance. And then occurred a little thing that was destined to live in his memory for many a day, and that thrilled him with a new and strange delight. He had never been of the so-called "spooney" set at the 'Varsity. Pretty girls galore there were about that famous institute, and he had danced at many a student party and romped through many a reel,

but the nearest he had ever come to something more than a mere jolly friendship for a girl was the regard in which he held his partner in the "Mixed Doubles," but that was all on account of her exuberant health, spirits, general comeliness of face and form, and exquisite skill in tennis. But this day a new and eager longing was eating at his heart; a strange, dull pang seemed to seize upon it as he noted in a flash that the seat that was to have been his was occupied by an officer many years his senior, a man he knew only by sight and an enviable reputation, a man whose soldierly, clear-cut face never turned an instant, for his eyes were fixed upon a lovely picture on the opposite seat —Amy Lawrence bending eagerly forward and gazing with her beautiful eyes alight with sympathy, interest and frank liking in search of the sorely disappointed young officer. "There he is!" she cried, though too far away for him to hear, and then, with no more thought of coquetry than a kitten, with no more motive in the world than that of conveying to him an idea of her sorrow, her sympathy, her perhaps

pardonable and exaggerated indignation at what she deemed an act of tyranny on part of his commander, with only an instant in which to express it all—her sweet face flushed, her eyes flamed with the light of her girlish enthusiasm and in that instant she had kissed her hand to him. Colonel Armstrong, turning suddenly and sharply to see who could be the object of interest so absorbing, caught one flitting glimpse of Billy Gray lifting his cap in quick acknowledgment, and the words that were on the tip of Armstrong's tongue the moment before were withheld for a more auspicious occasion—and it did not come too soon.

It was only four days after that initial meeting in the General's tent the foggy evening of the girl's first visit to camp, but both in town and on the tented field there had been several young ladies. Junior officers had monopolized the time and attention of the latter, but Armstrong was a close observer and a man who loved all that was strong, high-minded and true in his own sex, and that was pure and sweet and winsome in woman. A keen soldier,

he had spent many years in active service, most of them in the hardy, eventful and vigorous life of the Indian frontier. He had been conspicuous in more than one stirring campaign against the red warriors of the plains, had won his medal of honor before his first promotion, and his captaincy by brevet for daring conduct in action long antedated the right to wear the double bars of that grade. He had seen much of the world, at home and abroad; had traveled much, read much, thought much, but these were things of less concern to many a woman in our much married army than the question as to whether he had ever loved much. Certain it was he had never married, but *that* didn't settle it. Many a man loves, said they, without getting married, forgetful of the other side of the proposition advanced by horrid regimental cynics, that many men marry without getting loved. Armstrong would not have proved an easy man to question on that, or indeed on any other subject which he considered personal to himself. Even in his own regiment in the regular service he had long been looked upon

as an exclusive sort of fellow—a man who had no intimates and not many companions, yet, officers and soldiers, he held the respect and esteem of the entire command, even of those whom he kept at a distance, and few are the regiments in which there are not one or two characters who are best seen and studied through a binocular. Without being sympathetic, said his critics, Armstrong was "square," but his critics had scant means of knowing whether he was sympathetic or not. He was a steadfast fellow, an unswerving, uncompromising sort of man, a man who would never have done for a diplomat, and could never have been elected to office. But he was truthful, just, and as the English officer reluctantly said of Lucan, whom he hated, "Yes—damn him—he's brave." The men whom he did not seem to like in the army and who disliked him accordingly, were compelled to admit, to themselves at least, that their reasons were comprised in the above-recorded, regretable, but unmistakable fact—he didn't like them. Another trait, unpopular, was that he knew

when and how to say no. He smoked too much, perhaps, and talked too little for those who would use his words as witnesses against him. He never gambled, he rarely drank, he nerve lent nor borrowed. He was a bachelor, yet would never join a "mess" but kept house himself and usually had some favored comrade living with him. He was forty and did not look thirty-five. He was tall, erect, athletic, hardy and graceful in build, and his face was one of the best to be seen in many a line of officers at parade. His eyes were steel-gray and clear and penetrating, his features clear-cut, almost *too* delicately cut, thought some of the best friends he had among the men. His hair was brown, sprinkled liberally with silver; his mouth, an admirable mouth in every way, was shaded and half-l i lden by a long, drooping mustache to which, some men thought and some women said, his tapering white fingers paid too much attention, but I doubt if a knowledge of this criticism would have led to the faintest alteration in the habit. Generally the expression of Armstrong's face was grave,

and, on duty, a trifle stern; and not ten people in the world were aware what humor could twinkle in the clear, keen eyes, or twitch about the corners of that mobile mouth. There were not five who knew the tenderness that lay in hiding there, for Armstrong had few living kindred and they were men. There lived not, as he drove this glorious August morning to the breezy uplands beyond the camps, one woman who could say she had seen those eyes of Armstrong's melt and glow with love. As for Amy Lawrence, she was not dreaming of such a thing. She was not even looking at him. Her thoughts at the moment were drifting back to that usually light-hearted boy who stood gazing so disconsolately after them as they drove away, her eyes were intent upon an approaching group that presently reclaimed her wandering thoughts.

Coming up Point Lobos Avenue strode a party of four—all soldiers. One of these, wild-eyed, bareheaded, dishevelled, his clothing torn, his wrists lashed behind him, walked between two armed guards. The fourth, a sergeant,

followed at their heels. Miss Lawrence had just time to note that the downcast face was dark and oval and refined, when it was sud denly uplifted at sound of the whirring carriage wheels. A light of recognition, almost of terror, flashed across it, and with one bound the prisoner sprang from between his guards, dove almost under the noses of the startled team, and darted through the wide-open doorway of a corner saloon. He was out of sight in a second.

CHAPTER IV.

THE review that morning had drawn a crowd to the drill grounds that baffled the efforts of the guards. Carriages from camps and carriages from town, carts from the suburbs, equestrians from the parks and pedestrians from everywhere had gradually encroached within kicking distance of the heels of the cavalry escorting the general commanding the department, and that official noted with unerring eye that the populace was coming up on his flanks, so to speak, at the moment when the etiquette of the service required that he should be gazing only to his immediate front and responding to the salutes of the marching column. Back of him, ranged in long, single rank, was drawn up what the newspapers unanimously described as a "brilliant" staff, despite the fact that all were in sombre campaign uniform and several had never been so rated

before. In their rear, in turn, was the line of mounted orderlies and farther still the silent rank of the escorting troop. Sentries had been posted to keep the throng at proper distance, but double their force could have accomplished nothing—the omniscient corporal could not help them, and after asking one or two stray officers what they would do about it, the sentries gave way and the crowd swarmed in. It was just as the head of the long tramping column came opposite the reviewing point, and the brigade commander and his staff, turning out after saluting, found their allotted station on the right of the reviewing party completely taken up by the mass of eager spectators. A minute or so was required before the trouble could be remedied, for, just as the officers and orderlies were endeavoring to induce the populace to give way—a thing the American always resists with a gay good humor that is peculiarly his own—a nervous hack driver on the outskirts backed his bulky trap with unexpected force, and penned between it and the wheels of a newly-arrived and much more presentable

equipage a fair equestrian who shrieked with fright and clung to her pommel as her excited "mount" lashed out with his heels and made splinters of the hack's rearmost spokes and felloes. Down went the hack on its axle point. Out sprang a tall officer from the open carriage, and in a second, it seemed, transferred the panic-stricken horsewoman from the seismatic saddle to the safety of his own seat and the ministrations of the two young women and the gray haired civilian who were the latest arrivals. This done, and after one quick glance at the lady's helpless escort, a young officer from the Presidio, he shouldered his way through the crowd and stood, presently, on its inner edge, an unperturbed and most interested spectator. Battalion after battalion, in heavy marching order, in the dark-blue service dress, with campaign hats and leggings, with ranks well closed and long, well-aligned fronts, with accurate trace of the guides and well-judged distance, the great regiments came striding down the gentle slope, conscious, every officer and man, of the admiration they commanded. Armstrong, him

self commander of a fine regiment of volunteers in another brigade, looked upon them with a soldier's eye, and looked approvingly. Then, as the rearmost company passed the reviewing point and gentlemen with two stars on each shoulder extended their congratulations to the reviewed commander with one, Armstrong also made his way among the mounted officers in his calm, deliberate fashion, heedless of threatening heels and crowding forehands, until he, too, could say his word of cordial greeting. He had to wait a few minutes, for the general officers were grouped and talking earnestly. He heard a few words and knew well enough what was meant—that quantities of stores intended for the soldiers—even dainties contributed by the Red Cross Society—had been stolen from time to time and spirited off in the dead of night, and doubtless sold in town for the benefit of a pack of unknown scoundrels enlisted for no better purpose. In his own regiment his system had been so strict that no loss was discoverable, but in certain others the deficit was great. Complaints were loud, and the

camp commander, stung possibly by comments from the city, had urged his officers to unusual effort, and had promised punishment to the extent of the law on the guilty parties whenever or wherever found.

Even as he was exchanging a word with the brigadier, Armstrong heard the exclamation: "By Jove—they've caught another!" for with a grim smile of gratification the camp commander had read and turned over to his adjutant-general a brief dispatch just handed him by a mounted orderly who had galloped part.

"One of *your* irreproachables, Armstrong," said one of the staff, with something half-sneer, half-taunt as he too read and then passed the paper to the judge-advocate of the division.

Armstrong turned with his usual deliberation. There was ever about him a quiet dignity of manner that was the delight of his friends and despair of his foes.

"What is his name?" he calmly asked.

"One of those society swells of whom you have so many," was the reply.

"That does not give his name—nor iden-

tify him as one of my men," said Armstrong coolly.

"Oh, well, I didn't say he belonged to your command," was the staff officer's response, "but one of the kid-glove crowd that's got into the ranks."

"If you mean the recruits in the —teenth Infantry, I should be slow to suspect them of any crime," said Armstrong, with something almost like a drawl, so slow and deliberate was his manner, and now the steel-gray eyes and the fair, clear-cut face were turned straight upon the snapping eyes and dark features of the other. There was no love lost *there*. One could tell without so much as seeing.

"You're off, then! That commissary-sergeant caught one of 'em in the act—he got wind of it and skipped, and to-day came back in handcuffs."

"All of which may be as you say," answered Armstrong, "and still not warrant your reference to him as one of my irreproachables."

By this time much of the crowd and most of

the vehicles had driven away. The generals still sat in saddle chatting earnestly together, while their staff officers listened in some impatience to the conversation just recorded. Everybody knew the fault was not Armstrong's, but it was jarring to have to sit and hearken to the controversy. "Don't ever twit or try funny business with Armstrong," once said a regimental sage. "He has no sense of humor—of that kind. "Those who best knew him knew that Armstrong never tolerated unjust accusations, great or small. In his desire to say an irritating thing to a man he both envied and respected, the staff officer had not confined himself to facts, and it proved a boomerang.

And now, Armstrong's eyes had lighted for an instant on the alleged culprit. Seated opposite Miss Lawrence as the carriage whirled across Point Lobos Avenue, and watching her unobtrusively, he saw the sudden light of alarm and excitement in her expressive face, heard the faint exclamation as her gloved hand grasped the rail of the seat, felt the quick sway of the vehicle

as the horses shied in fright at some object beyond his vision. Then as they dashed on he had seen the running guard and, just vanishing within the portals of the corner building, the slim figure of the escaping prisoner. He saw the quivering hands tearing at their fastenings. He turned to the driver and bade him stop a minute, but it took fifty yards of effort before the spirited horses could be calmed and brought to a halt at the curb. To the startled inquiries of Mr. Prime and his daughter as to the cause of the excitement and the running and shouting he answered simply: "A prisoner escaped, I think," and sent a passing corporal to inquire the result. The man came back in a minute.

"They got him easy, sir. He had no show. His hands were tied behind his back and he couldn't climb," was the brief report.

"They have not hurt him, I hope," said Armstrong.

"No, sir. He hurt them—one of 'em, at least, before he'd surrender when they nabbed him in town. This time he submitted all right—said

he only ran in for a glass of beer, and was laughing-like when I got there."

"Very well. That'll do. Go on, driver. We haven't a minute to lose if we are to see the review," he continued, as he stepped lightly to his seat.

"I saw nothing of this affair," said Miss Prime. "What was it all about?"

"Nor could I see," added her father. "I heard shouts and after we passed saw the guard, but no fugitive."

"It is just as well—indeed I'm glad you didn't, uncle," answered Miss Lawrence, turning even as she spoke and gazing wistfully back. "He looked so young, and seemed so desperate, and had such a—I don't know—*hunted* look on his face—poor fellow."

And then the carriage reached the entrance to the reservation and the subject, and the second object of Miss Lawrence's sympathies, evoked that day, were for the time forgotten. Possibly Mrs. Garrison was partly responsible for this for, hardly had they rounded the bend in the road that brought them in full view,

from the left, or southern flank, of the long line of masses in which the brigade was formed, than there came cantering up to them, all gay good humor, all smiles and saucy coquetry, their hostess of the evening at the General's tent. She was mounted on a sorry-looking horse, but the "habit" was a triumph of art, and it well became her slender, rounded figure.

No one who really analyzed Mrs. Frank Garrison's features could say that she was a pretty woman. No one who looked merely at the general effect when she was out for conquest could deny it. Colonel Armstrong, placidly observant as usual, was quick to note the glances that shot between the cousins on the rear seat as the little lady came blithely alongside. He knew her, and saw that they were beginning to be as wise as he, for the smiles with which they greeted her were but wintry reflections of those that beamed upon her radiant face. Prime, paterfamilias, bent cordially forward in welcome, but her quick eyes had recognized the fourth occupant by this time, and there was a little less of assurance in her manner from that instant.

"How *per*fectly delicious!" she cried. "I feared from what you said yesterday you weren't coming, and so I never ordered the carriage, but came out in saddle—I can't say on *horse*back with such a wreck as this, but every decent horse in the Presidio had to go out with the generals and staffs, you know, and I had to take what I could get—both horse and escort," she added, in confidential tone. "Oh! —May I present Mr. Ellis? He knows you all by name already." The youth in attendance and a McClellan tree two sizes too big for him, lifted his cap and strove to smile; he had ridden nothing harder than a park hack before that day. "Frank says I talk of nothing else. But—where's Mr. Gray? Surely I thought *he* would be with you." This for Armstrong's benefit in case he were in the least interested in either damsel.

"Mr. Gray was detained by some duties in camp," explained Miss Prime, with just a trace of reserve that was lost upon neither their new companion nor the colonel. It settled a matter the placid officer was revolving in his mind.

"Pardon us, Mrs. Garrison," he said briefly. "We must hurry. Go on, driver."

"Oh, *I* can keep up," was the indomitable answer, "even on this creature." And Mrs. Garrison proved her words by whipping her steed into a lunging canter and, sitting him admirably, rode gallantly alongside, and just where Mr. Prime could not but see and admire since Colonel Armstrong would not look at all. He had entered into an explanation of the ceremony by that time well under way, and Miss Lawrence's great soft brown eyes were fixed upon him attentively when, perhaps, she should have been gazing at the maneuvers. Like those latter, possibly, her thoughts were "changing direction."

Not ten minutes later occurred the collision between the hack and the heels that resulted in the demolition of one and "demoralization" of the rider of the victor. While the latter was led away by the obedient Mr. Ellis lest the sight of him should bring on another nervous attack, Mrs. Garrison was suffering herself to be comforted. Her nerves were gone,

but she had not lost her head. Lots of Presidio dames and damsels were up on the heights that day in such vehicles as the post afforded. None appeared in anything so stylish and elegant as the carriage of the Prime party. She was a new and comparative stranger there, and it would vastly enhance her social *prestige*, she argued, to be seen in such "swell" surroundings. With a little tact and management she might even arrange matters so that, willy nilly, her friends would drive her home instead of taking Colonel Armstrong back to camp. That would be a stroke worth playing. She owed Stanley Armstrong a bitter grudge, and had nursed it long. She had known him ten years and hated him nine of them. Where they met and when it really matters not. In the army people meet and part in a hundred places when they never expected to meet again. She had married Frank Garrison in a hand gallop, said the garrison chronicles, "before she had known him two months," said the men, "before he knew her at all," said the women. She was four years his senior, if the chaplain could be

believed and five months his junior if *she* could. Whatever might have been the discrepancy in their ages at the time of the ceremony no one would suspect the truth who saw them now. It was he who looked aged and careworn and harassed, and she who preserved her youthful bloom and vivacity.

And now, as she reclined as though still too weak and shaken to leave the carriage and return to saddle her quick wits were planning the scheme that should result in *her* retaining, and his losing the coveted seat. There was little time to lose. Most of the crowd had scattered, and she well knew that he was only waiting for her to leave before he would return. Almost at the instant her opportunity came. A covered wagon reined suddenly alongside and kind and sympathetic voices hailed her: "Do let us drive you home, Mrs. Garrison; you must have been terribly shaken." She recognized at once the wife and daughter of a prominent officer of the post.

"Oh, how kind you are!" she cried. "I was hoping some one would come. Indeed, I *did*

get a little wrench." And then, as she moved, with a sudden gasp of pain, she clasped Miss Lawrence's extended hand.

"Indeed, you must not stir, Mrs. Garrison," said that young lady. "We will drive you home at once." Miss Prime and her father were adding their pleas. She looked up, smiling faintly.

"I fear I must trouble you," she faltered. "Oh, how stupid of me! But about Stanley Armstrong—I haven't even thanked him. Ah, well — *he* knows. We've been — such good friends for years—dear old fellow!"

CHAPTER V.

THERE had been a morning of jubilee in the camp of the Fifth Separate Brigade, and a row in the tents of the regulars. Up to within a fortnight such a state of affairs would have been considered abnormal, for the papers would have it that the former were on the verge of dissolution through plague, pestilence and famine due to the neglect of officials vaguely referred to as "the military authorities," or "the staff," while, up to the coming of Canker to command, sweet accord had reigned in the regular brigade, and the volunteers looked on with envy. But now a great martial magnate had praised the stalwart citizen soldiery whom he had passed in review early in the day, and set them to shouting by the announcement that, as reward for their hard work and assiduous drill, they should have their heart's desire and be shipped across the seas to far Manila. It

had all been settled beforehand at headquarters. The "chief" had known for four days that that particular command would be selected for the next expedition, but it tickled "the boys" to have it put that way, and the home papers would make so much of it. So there was singing and triumph and rejoicing all along the eastern verge of a rocky, roughly paved cross street, and rank blasphemy across the way. To the scandal and sorrow of the —teenth Infantry some of the recent robberies had been traced to their very doors. A commissary-sergeant had "weakened," a cartman had "squealed," and one of the most popular and attractive young soldiers in the whole command was now a prisoner in the guardhouse charged with criminal knowledge of the whole affair, and of being a large recipient of the ill-gotten money—Morton of the adjutant's office, a private in Company "K."

What made it worse was the allegation that several others, noncommissioned officers and "special duty men," were mixed up in the matter, and Canker had rasped the whole commis-

sioned force present for duty, in his lecture upon the subject, and had almost intimated that officers were conniving at the concealment of the guilt of their sergeants rather than have it leak out that the felony was committed in a company of their commanding.

He and Gordon had had what was described as a "red-hot" row, all because Gordon flatly declared that while *something* was queer about the case of the young clerk who "had money to burn," as the men said, he'd bet his bottom dollar he wasn't a thief. Canker said such language was a reflection on himself, as he had personally investigated the case, was convinced Morton's guilt could be established, and had so reported to the brigade commander in recommending trial by general court-martial. Indeed he had made out a case against the lad even before he was arrested and returned to camp. Gordon asked if he had seen the boy and heard his story. Canker reddened and said he hadn't, and he didn't mean to and didn't have to. Gordon said *he* had—he had talked with the lad fully and freely on his being brought to camp

toward nine o'clock, and was greatly impressed with his story—as would any one else be who heard it. Canker reddened still more and said he wouldn't allow officers to interview prisoners without his authority. "I'll prefer charges against the next that does it," said he.

And not three hours later, Mr. Billy Gray, sprawling on his camp cot, striving to forget the sorrow of the earlier morning, and to memorize a page of paragraphs of army regulations, was suddenly accosted by an orderly who stood at the front of the tent, scratching at the tent flap—the camp substitute for a ring at the bell.

"A note for the lieutenant," said he, darting in and then darting out, possibly fearful of question. It was a queer note:

"I am a total stranger to you, but I wore in brighter days the badge of the same society that was yours at the university. Three of the fraternity are in my company—one is on guard and he urged me to write at once to you. They know me to be a Brother Delt, even though I dare not tell my real name. What I have to say is that the charge against me is utterly false, as I can convince you, but could not con-

vince a court. I am confined at the moment of all others in my life when it is most vitally important that I should be free. Grant me ten minutes' interview this afternoon and if I do not prove myself guiltless I will ask no favor —but when I *do* convince you, do as you would be done by. Yours in Λ Σ X,

"GEORGE MORTON."

"Well, I'll be blessed!" said Mr. Gray, as he rolled out of his gray blanket. "Here's a state of things! Listen to this, captain," he called to his company commander in the adjoining tent. "Here's Morton, back from forty-eight hours' absence without leave, brought back by armed guard after sharp resistance, charged with Lord knows what all, wants to tell me his story and prove his innocence."

"You let him alone," growled his senior. "Remember what Canker said, or you'll go in arrest. What call has Morton on you, I'd like to know?"

The lad flushed. Fraternity was a very sacred thing in the Λ Σ X. It was "the most exclusive crowd at the 'Varsity." Its mem-

bership was pledged to one another by unusual ties. It was the hardest society for a fellow to get into in any one of the seven colleges whereat it flourished, and its mystic bonds were not shaken off with the silken gown and "mortar board" of undergraduate days, but followed its membership through many a maturer year. It was a society most college men might ask to join in vain. Money, social station, influence were powerless. Not until a student had been under observation two whole years and was *thoroughly* known could he hope for a "bid" to become a "Delta Sig." Not until another six months of probation could he sport its colors, and not until he formally withdrew from its fold, in post graduation years, could he consider himself absolved from its mild obligations. But the boast of the "Delta Sig" had ever been that no one of its membership had ever turned a deaf ear to a fellow in need of aid. Who of its originators ever dreamed of such a thing as its drifting into and becoming a factor in the affairs of the regular army?

No wonder Gray stood for a moment, the

paper still in his hands, irresolute, even disturbed. Not to answer the appeal meant to run counter to all the tenets of his fraternity. To answer might mean arrest and court-martial for deliberate disobedience of orders. Canker had no more mercy than an Indian. It was barely forty-eight hours since he had been publicly warned by an experienced old captain that he would find no "guardian angel" in Squeers. It would seriously mar his prospects to start now with Squeers "down on him," and as that lynx-eyed commander was ever on watch for infractions of orders, Billy well knew that he could not hope to see and talk with the prisoner and Canker not hear of it. To ask permission of Canker would only make matters worse—he was sure to refuse and then re-emphasize his orders and redouble his vigilance. To ask the consent of the officer-of-the-day or the connivance of the officer-of-the-guard was to invite them to court arrest and trial on their own account. He couldn't do that even to oblige a brother Delt. If only Ned Craven were officer-of-the-guard something might be done—he was

a college man, too, and though not a "Delt," but rather of a rival set, he "would understand" and possibly help. Guard mount was held toward dusk and that was four hours away, at least. The prisoner's note and tone were urgent. An idea occurred to Billy: What if he could get Gordon to let *him* "go on" this very evening? It wasn't his tour. He had "marched off" only two days before as he well remembered, for Canker had "roughed" him up and down about that little error in copying the list of prisoners from the report of the previous day. Moreover, he had counted on going to town right after "retreat," dining at the Palace, an extravagance not to be thought of at other times, so as to be on hand when the Primes and Amy Lawrence came down to dinner. He had planned it all—even to the amount of surprise he was to exhibit when he should discover about when he had finished his own dinner that they were just beginning theirs, and the extent and degree of pleasurable emotion he might venture on showing as he hastened over to greet them, and accept their offer

to be seated with them, even if he had been so unkind as to dine beforehand *solus* instead of with them. He had set his heart on having a chat with Miss Lawrence as part recompense for all he had lost that morning, and all this he was thinking of while still fumbling over that disturbing note. Time was getting short, too; there was no telling how much longer they might stay. Mr. Prime had brought his only daughter all that long journey across the continent on the assurance that the boy he loved, with whom he had quarreled, and whom, in his anger, he had sorely rebuked, had enlisted there in San Francisco and was serving in a regiment at the great camp west of the city. He had come full of hope and confidence; he had found the young soldier described, and, in his bitter disappointment, he declared there was no resemblance to justify the report sent him by the boy's own uncle, who vowed he had met him with comrades on the main street of the city, that the recognition was mutual, for the boy had darted around the first corner and escaped. His companions were scattered by

the time Mr. Lawrence returned to the spot after a brief, fruitless search, but private detectives had taken it up and "located," as they thought, young Prime and telegraphed the father in the distant East.

Now, Mr. Lawrence was away on business of his own. Written assurances that he couldn't be mistaken lost weight, and Mr. Prime, disheartened, was merely waiting the report of an agent who thought he had traced the boy to Tampa. In twenty-four hours he might spirit his daughter away on another chase, and then there would be no further warrant for Miss Lawrence's remaining in the city. She would return to her lovely home in one of the loveliest of Californian valleys, miles away from the raw fogs and chills of the Golden Gate, and would be no more seen among the camps. That, said Billy Gray to himself, would take every bit of sunshine from his life.

All this detail, or much of it, he had learned from the fair lips of Miss Lawrence herself, for Mr. Prime and his daughter seemed to shrink from speaking of the matter. From the first

Miss Amy had had to take the young gentleman under her personal wing, as it were. In her desire to aid her uncle and cousin in every way, and knowing them to be strangers to the entire camp, she had eagerly sent for him as the first familiar or friendly object she saw. Then when he came and was presented, and proved to possess little interest to the careworn man and his anxious and devoted child, it devolved upon Miss Lawrence to make much of Billy in proportion as they made little of him, and for three days or so the blithe young fellow seemed fairly to walk on air. Moreover, she had taken him into the family confidences in telling him of the missing son and brother, for both her uncle and cousin, she said, were so sensitive about it they could not talk to any one except when actually necessary. They had leaned, as it were, on the General and on Colonel Armstrong for a day, and then seemed to draw away from both. They even seemed to take it much amiss that her father *had* to be absent when they came, though they had sent no word, until too late, of their coming. He

was on his return, might arrive any hour, but so might they go. Now if Billy could only discover that missing son——

Then came an inspiration! Penciling a brief note he gave it to a soldier of his company and bade him take it to the guard tents. It told Morton of the colonel's orders, issued that very day, and bade him be patient—he hoped and believed opportunity would be afforded for an interview that evening. Then he hunted up a subaltern of his own grade whom he knew would probably be the detail for officer-of-the-guard that evening. "Brooke," said he, "will you swap tours with me if Gordon's willing. I have—I'd like mightily to exchange if it's all the same to you."

Brooke hesitated. He had social hopes and aspirations of his own. By "swapping" with Gray he might find himself doomed to a night in camp when he had accepted for some pleasant function in town.

"Thought you were keen to go in to-night—right after retreat," he hazarded.

"Well, I was," said Gray, pulling his drab

campaign hat down over his eyes to shut out the glare of the westering sun. "But I've got —a new wrinkle."

"Some bid for Friday? That's your tour, isn't it?" And Brooke began counting on his fingers. "Wait till I look at my notebook. Friday? Why, that's the night of the Burton's card party—thought you didn't know them."

"I don't," said Gray, glad enough to escape the other question. " And you hate card parties, you know you do. It's a go, is it? I'll see Gordon at once." And off he went, leaving Brooke to wonder why he should be so bent on the arrangement.

But Gordon proved an unexpected foe to the plan. "Can't be done, Billy," said he, sententiously. "Canker watches those details like a hawk. He hasn't forgotten you only came off two days ago, and if I were to mount you to-night he'd mount *me*—with both feet."

"Think there's any use in asking him?" queried the boy, tossing a backward glance toward Canker's tent.

"Not unless you're suffering for another snub. That man loves to say 'no' as much as any girl I ever asked, and he doesn't do it to be coaxed, either. Best leave it alone, Billy."

And then the unexpected happened. Into the tent with quick, impetuous step, came the commanding officer himself, and something had occurred to stir that gentleman to the core. His eyes were snapping, and his head was high.

"Mr. Gordon," said he, "here's more of this pilfering business, and now they're beginning to find out it isn't *all* in my camp by a damned sight. I want that letter copied at once." Then with a glance at Gray, who had whipped off his cap and was standing in respectful attitude, he changed his tone from the querulous, half-treble of complaint. "What's this you'd best leave alone?" he suddenly demanded. "There are a dozen things you'd best leave alone and a dozen you would do well to cultivate and study. When *I* was—however, I never was a lieutenant except in war-time, when they amounted to something. I got my professional knowledge in front of the enemy—not at any

damned charity school. You're here to ask some new indulgence, I suppose. Want to stay in town over night and fritter away your money and the time the government pays for. No, sir; you can't have my consent. You will be back in camp at twelve o'clock, and stop and report your return to the officer-of-the-guard, so that I may know the hour you come in. Who's officer-of-the-guard to-night, Mr. Gordon?"

"Mr. Brooke, sir."

"Mr. Brooke! Why, I thought I told you he was to take those prisoners in town to-morrow. He has to testify before that court in the case of Sergeant Kelly and it saves my sending another officer and having two of our lieutenants away from drill and hanging around the Bohemian Club. Detail somebody else!"

"All right, sir," answered Gordon imperturbably. "Make any odds, sir, who is detailed?"

Canker had turned to his desk and was tossing over the papers with nervous hand. Gray impulsively stepped forward, his eyes kindling with hope. It was on the tip of his tongue to

launch into a proffer of his own services for the detail, but Gordon hastily warned him back with a sweep of the hand and a portentous scowl.

"No. One's as bad as the other. Next thing *I* know some of 'em will be letting prisoners escape right under my nose, making us the laughing stock of these damned militia volunteers." (Canker entered service in '61 as a private in a city company that was militia to the tip of its spike-tailed coats, but he had forgotten it.) "I want these young idlers to understand distinctly, by George, that the first prisoner that gets away from this post takes somebody's commission with him. D'you hear *that*, Mr. Gray?" And Canker turned and glared at the bright blue eyes as though he would like to blast their clear fires with the breath of his disapprobation. "Has that young fellow, Morton, been put in irons yet?" he suddenly asked, whirling on Gordon again.

"Think not, sir. Supplies limited. Officer-of-the-day reported half an hour ago every set was in use. Sent over to division quartermas-

ter and he answered we had a dozen more'n we were entitled to *now*. Wanted to know 'f we meant to iron the whole regiment——"

"The hell he did!" raged Canker. "I'll settle *that* in short order. My horse there, orderly! I'll be back by four, Mr. Gordon. Fix that detail to suit yourself." And so saying the irascible colonel flung himself out of the tent and into his saddle.

"You young idiot," said Gordon, whirling on Billy the moment the coast was clear. "You came within an ace of ruining the whole thing. *Never* ask Canker for anything, unless it's what you wish to be rid of. Tell Brooke you're for guard, and he's to go to town instead."

"Hopping mad," as he himself afterward expressed it, Colonel Canker had ridden over to "have it out" with the quartermaster who had ventured to comment on his methods, but the sight of the commanding general, standing alone at the entrance to his private tent, his pale face grayer than ever and a world of trouble in his eyes, compelled Canker to stop

short. Two or three orderlies were on the run. Two aides-de-camp, Mr. Garrison and a comrade were searching through desks and boxes, their faces grave and concerned. The regimental commander was off his horse in a second. "Anything amiss, General?" he asked, with soldierly salute.

The General turned slowly toward him. "Can our men sell letters," he said, "as well as food and forage? Do people *buy* such things? A most important package has been—stolen from my tent."

CHAPTER VI.

THE great thoroughfare of that wonderful city, seated on more than her seven hills, and ruling the Western world, was thronged from curb to curb. Gay with bunting and streamers, the tall buildings of the rival newspapers and the long *façades* of hotels and business blocks were gayer still with the life and color and enthusiasm that crowded every window. Street traffic was blocked. Cable cars clanged vainly and the police strove valiantly. It was a day given up to but one duty and one purpose, that of giving Godspeed to the soldiery ordered for service in the distant Philippines, and, though they hailed from almost every section of the Union except the Pacific slope, as though they were her own children, with all the hope and faith and pride and patriotism, with all the blessings and comforts with which she had loaded the foremost ships that sailed, yet hap-

pily without the tears that flowed when her own gallant regiment was among the first to lead the way San Francisco turned out *en masse* to cheer the men from far beyond the Sierras and the Rockies, and to see them proudly through the Golden Gate. Early in the day the guns of a famous light battery had been trundled, decked like some rose-covered chariot at the summer festival of flowers, through the winding lanes of eager forms and faces, the cannoneers almost dragged from the ranks by the clasping hands of men and women who seemed powerless to let go. With their little brown carbines tossed jauntily over the broad blue shoulders, half a regiment of regular cavalry, dismounted, had gone trudging down to the docks, cheered to the gateway of the pier by thousands of citizens who seemed to envy the very recruits who, only half-uniformed and drilled, brought up the rear of the column. Once within the massive wooden portals, the guards and sentries holding back the importunate crowd, the soldiers flung aside their heavy packs, and were mar-

shalled before an array of tempting tables and there feasted, comforted and rejoiced under the ministrations of that marvelous successor of the Sanitary Commission of the great Civil War of the sixties—the noble order of the Red Cross. There at those tables in the dust and din of the bustling piers, in the soot and heat of the railway station, in the jam and turmoil at the ferry houses, in the fog and chill of the seaward camps, in the fever-haunted wards of crowded field hospitals, from dawn till dark, from dark till dawn, toiled week after week devoted women in every grade of life, the wife of the millionaire, the daughter of the day laborer, the gently born, the delicately reared, the social pets and darlings, the humble seamstress, no one too high to stoop to aid the departing soldier, none too poor or low to deny him cheer and sympathy. The war was still young then. Spain had not lowered her riddled standard and sued for peace. Two great fleets had been swept from the seas, the guns of Santiago were silenced, and the stronghold of the Orient was sulking in the shadow of the flag, but there was

still soldier work to be done, and so long as the nation sent its fighting men through her broad and beautiful gates San Francisco and the Red Cross stood by with eager, lavish hands to heap upon the warrior sons of a score of other States, even as upon their own, every cheer and comfort that wealth could purchase, or human sympathy devise. It was the one feature of the war days of '98 that will never be forgotten.

At one of the flower-decked tables near the great "stage" that led to the main deck of the transport, a group of blithe young matrons and pretty girls had been busily serving fruit, coffee, *bouillon* and substantials to the troopers, man after man, for over two hours. There was lively chat and merry war of words going on at the moment between half a dozen young officers who had had their eyes on that particular table ever since the coming of the command, and were now making the most of their opportunities before the trumpets should sound the assembly and the word be passed to move aboard. All the heavy baggage and ammunition had, at last, been swung into the hold;

the guns of the battery had been lowered and securely chocked; the forecastle head was thronged with the red-trimmed uniforms of the artillerymen, who had already been embarked and were now jealously clamoring that the troopers should be "shut off" from the further ministrations of the Red Cross, and broadly intimating that it wasn't a fair deal that their rivals should be allowed a whole additional hour of lingering farewells.

Lingering farewells there certainly were. Many a young soldier and many a lass "paired off" in little nooks and corners among the stacks of bales and boxes, but at the table nearest the staging all seemed gay good humor. A merry little woman with straw-colored hair and pert, tip-tilted nose and much vivacity and complexion, had apparently taken the lead in the warfare of chaff and fun. Evidently she was no stranger to most of the officers. Almost as evidently, to a very close observer who stood a few paces away, she was no intimate of the group of women who with good right regarded that table as their especial and personal charge.

Her Red Cross badge was very new; her garb and gloves were just as fresh and spotless. *She* had not been ladling out milk and cream, or buttering sandwiches, or pinning souvenirs on dusty blue blouses ever since early morning. Other faces there showed through all their smiles and sweetness the traces of long days of unaccustomed work and short nights of troubled sleep. Marvelous were Mrs. Frank Garrison's recuperative powers, thought they who saw her brought home in the Primes' stylish carriage, weak and helpless and shaken after her adventure of the previous day. She had not been at the Presidio a week, and yet she pervaded it. She had never thought of such a thing as the Red Cross until she found it the center of the social firmament after her arrival at San Francisco, and here she was, the last comer, the foremost ("most forward" I *think* some one described it) in their circle at one of the most prominent tables, absorbing much of the attention, most of the glory, and none of the fatigue that should have been equally shared by all.

"*Adios!*" she gayly cried as the "assembly" rang out, loud and clear, and waving their hands and raising their caps, the officers hastened to join their commands. "*Adios*, till we meet in Manila."

"Do you *really* think of going to the Philippines, Mrs. Garrison?" queried a much older-looking, yet younger woman. "Why, *we* were told the General said that none of his staff would be allowed to take their wives."

"Yet there are others!" laughed Mrs. Garrison, waving a dainty handkerchief toward the troops now breaking into column of twos and slowly climbing the stage. "Who would *want* to go with that blessed old undertaker? Good-by—*bon voyage*, Geordie," she cried, blowing a kiss to the lieutenant at the head of the second troop, a youth who blushed and looked confused at the attention thereby centered upon him, and who would fain have shaken his fist, rather than waved the one unoccupied hand in perfunctory reply. "When *I* go I'll choose a ship with a band and broad decks, not any such cramped old canal boat as the Portland."

"Oh! I thought perhaps your husband—" began the lady dubiously, but with a significant glance at the silent faces about her.

"Who? Frank Garrison? Heavens! I haven't known what it was to have a husband—since that poor dear boy went on staff duty," promptly answered the diminutive center of attraction, a merry peal of laughter ringing under the dingy archway of the long, long roof. "Why, the Portland has only one stateroom in it big enough for a bandbox, and of course the General has to have that, and there isn't a deck where one couple could turn a slow waltz. No, indeed! wait for the next flotilla, when *our* fellows go, bands and all. *Then* we'll see."

"But surely, Mrs. Garrison, we are told the War Department has positively forbidden officer's wives from going on the transports"—again began her interrogator, a wistful look in her tired eyes. "I know I'd give *anything* to join Mr. Dutton."

"The War Department has to take orders quite as often as it gives them, Mrs. Dutton.

The thing is to know how to be of the order-giving side. Oh, joy!" she sudddenly cried. "Here are the Primes and Amy Lawrence—then the regiments must be coming! And there's Stanley Armstrong!"

Far up the westward street the distant roar of voices mingled with the swing and rhythm and crash of martial music. Dock policemen and soldiers on guard began boring a wide lane through the throng of people on the pier. A huge black transport ship lay moored along the opposite side to that on which the guns and troopers were embarked, and for hours bales, boxes and barrels had been swallowed up and stored in her capacious depths until now, over against the tables of the Red Cross, there lay behind a rope barrier, taut stretched and guarded by a line of sentries, an open space close under the side of the greater steamer and between the two landing stages, placed fore and aft. By this time the north side of the broad pier was littered with the inevitable relics of open air lunching, and though busy hands had been at work and the tables had been cleared, and fresh

white cloths were spread and everything *on* the tables began again to look fair and inviting, the good fairies themselves looked askance at their bestrewn surroundings. "Oh, if we could only move everything bodily over to the other side," wailed Madam President, as from her perch on a stack of Red Cross boxes she surveyed that coveted stretch of clean, unhampered flooring.

"And why not?" chirruped Mrs. Garrison, from a similar perch, a tier or two higher. "Here are men enough to move mountains. All we have to do is to say the word."

"Ah, but it isn't," replied the other, gazing wistfully about over the throng of faces, as though in search of some one sufficient in rank and authority to serve her purpose. "We plead in vain with the officer-of-the-guard. He says his orders are imperative—to allow no one to intrude on that space," and madam looked as though she would rather look anywhere than at the animated sprite above her.

"What nonsense!" shrilled Mrs. Garrison. "Here, Cherry," she called to a pretty girl,

standing near the base of the pile, "give me my bag. I'm army woman enough to know that order referred only to the street crowd that sometimes works in on the pier and steals." The bag was duly passed up to her. She cast one swift glance over the heads of the crowd to where a handsome carriage was slowly working its way among the groups of prettily dressed women and children—friends and relatives of members of the departing commands, in whose behalf, as though by special dispensation, the order excluding all but soldiers and the Red Cross had been modified. Already the lovely dark-eyed girl on the near side had waved her hand in greeting, responding to Mrs. Garrison's enthusiastic signals, but her companion, equally lovely, though of far different type, seemed preoccupied, perhaps unwilling to see, for her large, dark, thoughtful eyes were engaged with some object on the opposite side—not even with the distinguished looking soldier who sat facing her and talking quietly at the moment with Mr. Prime. There was a gleam of triumph in Mrs. Garrison's dancing

eyes as she took out a flat notebook and pencil and dashed off a few lines in bold and vigorous strokes. Tearing out the page, she rapidly read it over, folded it and glanced imperiously about her. A cavalry sergeant, one of the home troop destined to remain at the Presidio, was leaning over the edge of the pier, hanging on to an iron ring and shouting some parting words to comrades on the upper deck, but her shrill soprano cut through the dull roar of deep, masculine voices and the tramp of feet on resounding woodwork.

"Sergeant!" she cried, with quick decision. "Take this over to the officer in command of that guard. Then bring a dozen men and move these two tables across the pier." The cavalryman glanced at the saucy little woman in the stunning costume, "took in" the gold crossed sabres, topped by a regimental number in brilliants that pinned her martial collar at the round, white throat, noted the ribbon and pin and badge of the Red Cross, and the symbol of the Eighth Corps in red enamel and gold upon the breast of her jacket, and above all the ring

of accustomed authority in her tone, and never hesitated a second. Springing to the pile of boxes he grasped the paper, respectfully raised his cap, and bored his stalwart way across the pier. In three minutes he was back—half a dozen soldiers at his heels.

"Where'll you have 'em, ma'am—miss?" he asked, as the men grasped the supports and raised the nearmost table.

"Straight across and well over to the edge," she answered, in the same crisp tones of command. Then, with total and instant change of manner, "I suppose *your* tables should go first, Madam President, she smilingly said. "It shall be as you wish about the others."

And the Red Cross was vanquished.

"I declare, said an energetic official, a moment later, leaning back on her throne of lemon boxes, and fanning herself vigorously, "for a whole hour I've been trying to move that officer's heart and convince him the order didn't apply to us. Now how did—she—do it?"

"The officer must be some old—some personal friend," hazarded the secretary, with a

quick feminine comprehensive glance at the little lady now being lifted up to shake hands with the carriage folk, after being loaded with compliments and congratulations by the ladies of the two favored tables.

"Not at all," was the prompt reply. "He is a volunteer officer she never set eyes on before to-day. I *would* like to know what was on that paper."

But now the roar of cheering and the blare of martial music had reached the very gateway. The broad portals were thrown open and in blue and brown, crushed and squeezed by the attendant throng, the head of the column of infantry came striding on to the pier. The band, wheeling to one side, stood at the entrance, playing them in, the rafters ringing to the stirring strains of "The Liberty Bell." They were still far down the long pier, the sloping rifles just visible, dancing over the heads of the crowd. No time was to be lost. More tables were to be carried, but—who but that—"that little army woman" could give the order so that it would be obeyed. Not one bit

did the president like to do it, but something had to be done to obtain the necessary order, for the soldiers who so willingly and promptly obeyed her beck and call were now edging away for a look at the newcomers, and Mrs. Frank Garrison, perched on the carriage step and chatting most vivaciously with its occupants and no longer concerning herself, apparently, about the Red Cross or its tables, had the gratification of finding herself approached, quite as she had planned, by two most prominent and distinguished women of San Francisco society, and requested to issue instructions as to the moving of the other tables. "Certainly, ladies," she responded, with charming smiles. "Just *one* minute, Mildred. Don't drive farther yet," and within that minute half a dozen boys in blue were lugging at the first of the tables still left on the crowded side of the dock, and others still were bearing oil stoves, urns and trays. In less time than it takes to tell it the entire Red Cross equipage was on its way across the pier, and when the commanding officer of the arriving regiment reached the spot

which he had planned to occupy with his band, his staff and all his officers, there in state and ceremony to receive the citizens who came in swarms to bid them farewell, he found it occupied by as many as eight snowy, goody-laden tables, presided over by as many as eighty charming maids and matrons, all ready and eager to comfort and revive the inner man of his mighty regiment with coffee and good cheer illimitable, and the colonel swore a mighty oath and pounced on his luckless officer-of-the-guard. He had served as a subaltern many a year in the old army, and knew how it was done.

"Didn't I give you personal and positive orders not to let anything or anybody occupy this space after the baggage was got aboard, sir?" he demanded.

"You did, sir," said the unabashed lieutenant, pulling a folded paper from his belt, "and the Red Cross got word to the general and what the Red Cross says—*goes*. Look at that!"

The colonel looked, read, looked dazed, scratched his head and said: "Well, I'm

damned!" Then he turned to his adjutant. "You were with me when I saw the general last night and he told me to put this guard on and keep this space clear. Now, what d'you say to that?"

The adjutant glanced over the penciled lines. "Well," said he, "if you s'pose any order that discriminates against the Red Cross is going to hold good, once they find it out, you're bound to get left. They're feasting the first company now, sir; shall I have it stopped?" and there was a grin under the young soldier's mustache. The colonel paused one moment, shook his head and concluded he, too, would better grin and bear it. Taking the paper in his hand again he heard his name called and saw smiling faces and beckoning hands in an open carriage near him, but the sight of Stanley Armstrong, signalling to him from another, farther away, had something dominant about it. "With you in a minute," he called to those who first had summoned him. "What is it, Armstrong?"

"I wish to present you to some friends of

mine — Miss Lawrence — Miss Prime — Mr. Prime—my old associate, Colonel Stewart. Pardon me, Mrs. Garrison. I did not see you had returned." She had, and was once more perched upon the step. "Mrs. Garrison—Colonel Stewart. What we need to know, Stewart, is this: Will all your men board the ship by this stage, or will some go aft?"

"All by *this* stage—why?"

But the colonel felt a somewhat massive hand crushing down on his own and forebore to press the question. Armstrong let no pause ensue. He spoke, rapidly for him, bending forward, too, and speaking low; but even as she chatted and laughed, the little woman on the carriage step saw, even though she did not seem to look, heard, even though she did not seem to listen:

"An awkward thing has happened. The General's tent was robbed of important papers perhaps two days ago, and the guardhouse rid of a most important prisoner last night. Canker has put the officer-of-the-guard in arrest. Remember good old Billy Gray who commanded us at Apache? This is Billy Junior, and I'm

awful sorry." Here the soft gray eyes glanced quickly at the anxious face of Miss Lawrence, who sat silently feigning interest in the chat between the others. The anxious look in her eyes increased at Armstrong's next words: "The prisoner must have had friends. He is now said to be among your men, disguised, and those two fellows at the stage are detectives. I thought all that space was to be kept clear."

"It was," answered Stewart, "yet the chief must have been overpersuaded. Look here!" and the colonel held forth a scrap of paper. Amy Lawrence, hearing something like the gasp of a sufferer in sudden pain, turned quickly and saw that every vestige of color had left Mrs. Garrison's face—that she was almost reeling on the step. Before she could call attention to it, Armstrong, who had taken and glanced curiously at the scrap, whirled suddenly, and his eyes, in stern menace, swept the spot where the little lady clung but an instant before. As suddenly Mrs. Garrison had sprung from the step and vanished.

CHAPTER VII.

BILLY GRAY was indeed in close arrest and the grim prophecy was fulfilled—Colonel Canker was proving "anything but a guardian angel to him." The whole regiment, officers and men, barring only the commander, was practically in mourning with sorrow for him and chagrin over its own discomfiture. Not only one important prisoner was gone, but two; not only two, but four. No man in authority was able to say just when or how it happened, for it was Canker's own order that the prisoners should not be paraded when the guard fell in at night. They were there at tattoo and at taps "all secure." The officer of the guard, said several soldiers, had quite a long talk with one of the prisoners—young Morton—just after tattoo, at which time the entire guard had been inspected by the commanding officer himself. But at reveille four most important prisoners were

gone and, such was Canker's wrath, not only was Gray in arrest, but the sergeant of the guard also, while the three luckless men who were successively posted as sentries during the night at the back of the wooden shell that served as a guardhouse—were now in close confinement in the place of the escaped quartette.

Yet those three were men who had hitherto been above suspicion, and there were few soldiers in the regiment who would accept the theory that any one of the three had connived at the escape. As for the sergeant—he had served four enlistments in the —teenth, and without a flaw in his record beyond an occasional aberration in the now distant past, due to the potency of the poteen distilled by certain Hibernian experts not far from an old-time "plains fort," where the regiment had rested on its march 'cross continent. As for the officers —but who would suppose an officer guilty of anything of the kind — a flagrant military crime? And yet—men got to asking each other if it were so that Bugler Curran had carried a note from the prisoner, Morton, to Mr. Gray

about 2:30 that afternoon? And what was this about Gray's having urged Brooke to swap tours with him an hour later, and what was that story the headquarters clerks were telling about Mr. Gray's coming to the adjutant and begging to be allowed to "march on" that evening instead of Brooke? It wasn't long before these rumors, somehow, got to Canker's ears, and Canker seemed to grow as big again; he fairly swelled with indignation at thought of such turpitude on part of an officer. Then he sent for Gray—it was the afternoon following the sailing of the ships with the big brigade —and with pain and bewilderment and indignation in his brave blue eyes the youngster came and stood before his stern superior. Gordon, who sent the message, and who had heard Canker's denunciatory remarks, had found time to scribble a word or two—"Admit nothing; say nothing; *do* nothing but hold your tongue and temper. If C. insists on answers say you decline except in presence of your legal adviser." So there was a scene in the commander's tent that afternoon. The morning had not

been without its joys. Along about ten o'clock as Gray sat writing to his father in his little canvas home, he heard a voice that sent the blood leaping through his veins and filled his eyes with light. Springing from his campstool and capsizing it as he did so, he poked his curly head from the entrance of the tent—and there she was—only a dozen feet away—Major Lane in courteous attendance, Mr. Prime sadly following, and Miss Prime quite content with the devotions of Captain Schuyler. Only a dozen feet away and coming straight to him, with frank smiles and sympathy in her kind and winsome face—with hand outstretched the moment she caught sight of him. "We wanted to come when we heard of it yesterday, Mr. Gray," said Amy Lawrence, "but it was dark when we got back from seeing the fleet off, and uncle was too tired in the evening. Indeed we are all very, very sorry!" And poor Billy never heard or cared what the others said, so absorbed was he in drinking in her gentle words and gazing into her soft, dark eyes. No wonder he found it difficult to release her hand. That brief visit,

filled with sweetness and sunshine, ought to have been a blessing to him all day long, but Canker caught sight of the damsels as they walked away on the arms of the attendant cavaliers—Miss Lawrence more than once smiling back at the incarcerated Billy—and Canker demanded to be informed who they were and where they had been, and Gordon answered they were Miss Lawrence of Santa Anita, and Miss Prime of New York—and he "reckoned" they must have been in to condole with Mr. Gray — whereat Canker snarled that people ought to know better than to visit officers in arrest—it was tantamount to disrespect to the commander. It was marvelous how many things in Canker's eyes were disrespectful.

So he heard these stories with eager ears and sent for Gray, and thought to bully him into an admission or confession, but Gordon's words had "stiffened" the little fellow to the extent of braving Canker's anger and telling him he had said all he proposed to say when the colonel called him up the previous day. The result of that previous interview was his being placed

in close arrest and informed that he should be tried by general court-martial once. So he had taken counsel, as was his right, and "counsel" forbade his committing himself in any way.

"Then you refuse to divulge the contents of that note and to say why you were so eager to go on guard out of your turn?" said Canker, oracularly. "That in itself is sufficient to convince any fair-minded court of your guilt, sir." Whereat Gordon winked at Billy and put his tongue in his cheek—and Billy stood mute until ordered, with much asperity, to go back to his tent.

But there were other things that might well go toward convincing a court of the guilt of Lieutenant Gray, and poor Billy contemplated them with sinking heart. Taking prompt advantage of his position as officer of the guard, he had caused the young prisoner to be brought outside the guardhouse, and as a heavy, dripping fog had come on the wings of the night wind, sailing in from the sea, he had led the way to the sheltered side, which happened to be the darkest one, of the rude little building,

and had there bidden him tell his story. But Morton glanced uneasily at a sentry who followed close and was hovering suspiciously about. "I cannot talk about—the affair—with that fellow spying," he said, with an eager plea in his tone and a sign of the hand that Gray well knew and quickly recognized. "Keep around in front. I'll be responsible for this prisoner," were his orders, and, almost reluctantly, the man left. He was a veteran soldier, and his manner impressed the lieutenant with a vague sense of trouble. Twice the sentry glanced back and hesitated, as though something were on his mind that he must tell, but finally he disappeared and kept out of the way during the brief interview that immediately followed. The prisoner eagerly, excitedly began his explanation—swiftly banishing any lingering doubts Gray might have entertained as to his innocence. But he had come from a stove-heated guardroom into the cold sea wind off the Pacific—into the floating wisps of vapor that sent chill to the marrow. He was far too lightly clad for that climate, and presently he began to shiver.

"You are cold," said Gray, pityingly. "Have you no overcoat?"

"It's at my tent—I never expected to spend this night here. I've been before the summary court, fined for absence, and thought that would end it, but instead of that I'm a prisoner and the man who should be here is stalking about camp, planning more robberies. Yet I'd rather associate with the very worst of the deserters or dead beats inside there," and the dark eyes glanced almost in horror—the slender figure shook with mingled repulsion and chill—"than with that smooth-tongued sneak and liar. There's no crime too mean for him to commit, Mr. Gray, and the men are beginning to know it, though the colonel won't. For God's sake get me out of this before morning—" And again the violent tremor shook the lad from head to foot.

"Here—get inside!" said Gray impulsively. "I'll see the adjutant at once and return to you in a few minutes. If you have to remain until the matter can be investigated by the General it might be——"

"It would be—" vehemently interrupted Morton, then breaking off short as though at loss for descriptive of sufficient strength. He seemed to swell with passion as he clinched his fists and fairly stood upon his toes an instant, his strong white teeth grinding together. "It would be—simply hell!" he burst in again, hoarse and quivering. "It would ruin—everything! Can't the General give the order tonight?" he asked with intense eagerness, while the young officer, taking him by the arm, had led him again to the light of the guardhouse lamps at the front. The sergeant and a group of soldiers straightened up and faced them, listening curiously.

"It may be even impossible to see the General," answered Gray doubtfully. "Take Morton into the guardroom till I get back, sergeant, and let him warm himself thoroughly." Don't put him with the prisoners till I return, and so saying he had hastened away. Gordon, his friend and adviser, had left camp and gone visiting over in the other division. The lights at general headquarters were turned low. Even

now, after having heard proofs of the innocence of the accused soldier, Gray knew that it was useless to appeal to the colonel. He could not understand, however, the feverish, almost insane, impatience of the lad for immediate release. Another day ought not to make so great a difference. What could be the reason—if it were not that, though innocent of the robbery of the storehouse, or of complicity in the sale of stolen goods, some other crime lay at his door which the morrow might disclose? All the loyalty of a Delta Sig was stretched to the snapping point as Gray paused irresolute in front of the adjutant's tent, his quest there unsuccessful. The sergeant-major and a sorely badgered clerk were working late over some regimental papers—things that Morton wrote out easily and accurately.

"I suppose, sir, it's no use asking to have the prisoner sent up here under guard," said that jewel of a noncommissioned officer. "Yet the colonel will be savage if these papers ain't ready. It will take us all night as things are going."

Gray shook his curly head. "Go ask, if you like, but—Morton's in no shape to help you——"

"Has he been drinking, sir?" said the sergeant-major, in surprise. "I never knew him——"

"Oh, it isn't that," said Gray hastily, "only he's—he's got—other matters on his mind! Bring me his overcoat. He said it was in his tent," and the young officer jerked his head at the patch of little "A" tents lined up in the rear of those of the officers.

"Get Morton's overcoat and take it to him at the guardhouse," snapped the staff sergeant to the clerk. "Be spry now, and no stopping on the way back," he added—well aware how much in need his assistant stood of creature comfort of some surreptitious and forbidden kind. The man was back in a moment, the coat rolled on his arm.

"I'll take it," said Gray simply. "You needn't come."

"Go on with it!" ordered the sergeant as the soldier hesitated. "D'ye think the service has

gone to the devil and officers are runnin' errands for enlisted men? An' get back inside two minutes, too," he added with portent in his tone. The subaltern of hardly two months' service felt the implied rebuke of the soldier of over twenty years' and meekly accepted the amendment, but—a thought occurred to him: He had promised Morton paper, envelopes and stamps and the day's newspapers — the lad seemed strangely eager to get all the latter, and vaguely Billy remembered having heard that Canker considered giving papers to prisoners as equivalent to aid and comfort to the enemy.

"Take it by way of my tent," said he as they started, and, once there it took time to find things. "Go back to the sergeant-major and tell him I sent you," said Gray, after another search. "He needs you on those papers."

And when the officer of the guard returned to the guardhouse and went in to the prisoner, the sergeant saw—and others saw—that, rolled in the soldier's overcoat he carried on his arm, was a bundle done up in newspaper. Moreover, a scrap of conversation was overheard.

"There's no one at the General's," said the officer. "I see no way of—fixing it before morning."

"My God, lieutenant! There—must be some way out of it! The morning will be too late."

"Then I'll do what I can for you to-night," said Mr. Gray as he turned and hurriedly left the guardroom—a dozen men standing stiffly about the walls and doorway and staring with impassive faces straight to the front. Again, the young officer had left the post of the guard and gone up into camp, while far and near through the dim, fog-swept aisles of a score of camps the bugles and trumpets were wailing the signal for "lights out," and shadowy forms with coat collars turned up about the ears or capes muffled around the neck, scurried about the company streets ordering laughter and talk to cease. A covered carriage was standing at the curb outside the officers' gate—as a certain hole in the fence was designated—and the sentry there posted remembered that the officer of the guard came hurrying out and asked the driver if he was engaged. "I'm waiting for the major," was the answer.

"Well, where can one order a carriage to-night without going clear to town?" inquired Gray. "I want one—that is—I wish to order one at once."

And the driver who knew very well there were several places where carriages could be had, preferred loyalty to his own particular stable away in town, and so declared there was none.

"You can telephone there, if you wish, sir," he added.

"And wait till morning for it to get here? No! I'll get it—somehow."

And that he did get it somehow was current rumor on the following day, for the sentries on the guardhouse side of camp swore that a closed carriage drove down from McAllister Street for all the world as though it had just come out of the park, and rolled on past the back of the guardhouse, the driver loudly whistling "Killarney," so that it could be heard above the crunching of the wheels through the rough, loose rock that covered the road, and that carriage drew up not a hundred yards away, while the lieutenant was out visiting

sentries, and presently they saw him coming back along the walk, stopping to question each sentry as to his orders. Then he returned and inquired if all was quiet among the prisoners, and then went and put out his light in the tent reserved for the officer of the guard, and once more left his post, briefly informing the sergeant of the guard he was going to the officer of the day. Then it was ascertained that he had visited half a dozen places in search of that veteran captain, and appeared much disturbed because he could not find him. In half an hour he was back, asking excitedly of the sentry in rear of the guardhouse if a carriage had come that way. It had, said the sentry, and was waiting down the street. Gray hurried in the direction indicated, was gone perhaps three minutes, and returned, saying that the sentry must be mistaken, that no carriage was there. But the sentry reiterated his statement that it had been there and had been waiting for some time, and must have disappeared while he was temporarily around at the opposide side of the building. This was about 11 P.M.

Then when Gray appeared at reveille Morton had disappeared.

"It's not the sergeant let them fellers out," said the regimental oracles. "This is no ten-dollar subscription business." And so until late in the afternoon the question that agitated the entire range of regimental camps was: "How did those fellows break away from the prison of the —teenth?" Then came a clue, and then—discovery.

By order of Lieutenant-Colonel Canker a board of officers had been convened to investigate the matter, and after questioning everybody whom "Squeers" had already badgered with his assertions, threats and queries, they went to the guardhouse and began a thorough inspection of the premises. The wooden building stood in the midst of a waste of sand blown in from the shore line by the strong sea wind. It was perched on something like a dozen stout posts driven into the soft soil and then the space between the floor level and the sand was heavily and stoutly boarded in—thick planks being used. Between the floor and the sand was a

space of about eighteen inches vertical, and a dozen men could have sprawled therein—lying at full length—but to escape would have required the connivance of one or more of the sentries surrounding the building and the ripping off of one or more of the planks. In his keen anxiety Canker accompanied the Board on its tour of investigation—a thing the Board did not at all like—and presently, as was his wont, began running things his own way. It had been found useless to question the soldiers of the guard. Not a man could be found to admit he knew the faintest thing about the escape. As for the prisoners, most of them reckless, devil-may-care rascals, they grinned or leered suggestively, but had nothing to tell.

"We'll have this boarding ripped off," said Canker decisively, "and see what they've got secreted under there. I shouldn't be surprised to find a whisky still in full blast, or a complete gambling outfit—dash, dash 'em to dash and dashnation! Send for a carpenter, sergeant."

The carpenter came, and he and two or three

of the guard laid hold of one end of the plank after its nails were drawn, and with little exertion ripped it off the other posts. Then everybody held his breath a minute, stared, and a small majority swore. So far from its being open to cats, cans and rubbish, the space on that side was filled solid with damp, heavy sea sand —a vertical wall extending from floor to ground. Canker almost ran around to the opposite side and had a big plank torn off there. Within was a wall as damp, solid and straight as that first discovered, and so, when examined, were the other two sides provided. Canker's face was a study, and the Board gazed and was profoundly happy

At last the colonel exploded:

"By Jupiter! They haven't got away at all, then! There isn't a flaw in the sand wall anywhere. They must be hiding about the middle now Come on, gentlemen," and around he trotted to the front door. "Sergeant," he cried, "get out all the prisoners—all their bedding—every blessed thing they've got. I want to examine that floor."

Most of the guardhouse "birds" were out chopping wood, and Canker danced in among the few remaining, loading them with bedding belonging to their fellows until every item of clothing and furniture was shoved out of the room. One member of the Board and one only failed to enter with his associates—a veteran captain who read much war literature and abhorred Canker. To the surprise of the sentry he walked deliberately over to the fence, climbed it and presently began poking about the wooden curb that ran along the road, making a low revetment or retaining wall for the earth, cinders and gravel that, distributed over the sand, had been hopefully designated a sidewalk by the owners of the tract. Presently he came sauntering back, and both sentries within easy range would have sworn he was chuckling. Canker greeted him with customary asperity.

"What do you mean, sir, by absenting yourself from this investigation, when you must have known I was with the Board and giving it the benefit of the information I had gathered?"

"I was merely expediting matters, colonel. While you were looking for where they went in I was finding where they got out."

"Went in *what?* Got out of what?" snapped Canker.

"Their tunnel, sir. It's Libby on a small scale over again. They must have been at work at it at least ten days." And as he spoke, calmly ignoring Canker and letting his eyes wander over the floor, the veteran battalion commander sauntered across the room, stirred up a slightly projecting bit of flooring with the toe of his boot and placidly continued. "If you'll be good enough to let the men pry this up you *may* understand."

And when pried up and lifted away—a snugly fitting trapdoor about two feet square —there yawned beneath it, leading slantwise downward in the direction of the street, a tunnel through the soft yielding sand, braced and strengthened here and there with lids and sides of cracker-boxes. "Now, if you don't mind straddling a fence, sir, I'll show you the other end," said the captain, imperturbably leading the

way, and Canker, half-dazed yet wholly in command of his stock of blasphemy, followed. At the curb, right in the midst of a lot of loose hay from the bales dumped there three days before, the leader dislodged with his sword the top of a clothing box that had been thickly covered with sand and hay—and there was the outlet. "Easy as rolling off a log, colonel," said old Cobb, with a sarcastic grin. "This could all be done without a man you've blamed and arrested being a whit the wiser. They sawed a panel out of the floor, scooped the sand out of this tunnel, banked it solid against the weather boarding inside, filled up the whole space, pretty near, but ran their tunnel under fence and sidewalk, crawled down the gutter to the next block out of sight of the sentries, then walked away free men. Those three thieves who got away were old hands. The other men in the guardhouse were only mild offenders, except Morton. 'Course he was glad of the chance to go with 'em. I s'pose you'll release my sergeant and those sentries now."

"I'll do nothing of the kind," answered Can-

ker, red with wrath, "and your suggestion is disrespectful to your commanding officer. When I want your advice I'll ask for it."

"Well, Mr. Gray will be relieved to learn of this anyhow. I suppose I may tell *him*," hazarded the junior member, mischievously.

"Mr. Gray be ——. Mr. Gray has everything to answer for!" shouted the angered colonel. "It was he who telephoned for a carriage to meet and run those rascals off. Mr. Gray's fate is sealed. He can thank God I don't slap him into the guardhouse with his chosen associates, but *he* shan't escape. Sergeant of the guard, post a sentry over Lieutenant Gray's tent, with orders to allow no one to enter or leave it without my written authority. Mr. Gray shall pay for this behind the prison bars of Alcatraz."

CHAPTER VIII.

SOCIAL circles at West Point at long, rare intervals are shocked by a scandal, and at short ones, say every other summer—are stirred by some kind of a sensation, and the "Fairy Sisters" were the sensation of the year '97. They came in July; they went in September, and meanwhile they were "on the go," as they expressed it, from morn till late at night. Physically they were the lightest weights known to the hop room. Mentally, as their admirers in the corps expressed it, "either of them can take a fall out of any woman at the Point," and this was especially true of the elder—Mrs. Frank Garrison—whose husband was on staff duty in the far West. Both were slight, fragile, tiny blondes with light blue eyes, with lighter, fluffy hair, with exquisite little hands and feet, with oval, prettily shaped faces, and the younger—the maiden sister, had a bewitching mouth and

regular, snowy dots of teeth of which she was justly proud. Yet, as has been previously said of Mrs. Frank, while the general effect was in the case of each that of an extremely pretty young girl, the elder had no really good features, the younger only that one. They generally dressed very much alike in light, flimsy gowns, and hats, gloves and summer shoes all of dazzling white—sometimes verging for a change to a creamy hue—but colors, except for sashes or summer shawls, seemed banished from their wardrobes. They danced divinely, said the corps, and preferred cadet partners, to the joy of the battalion. They rode fearlessly and well, and had stunning hats and habits, but few opportunities for display thereof. They came tripping down the path from the hotel every morning, fresh and fair as daisies, in time for guard mounting, and at any hour after that could be found chatting with cadet friends at the visitors' tent, strolling arm in arm about the shaded walks with some of their many admirers until time to dress for the evening hop, where they never missed a dance, and on rainy

days, or on those evenings when there was neither hop nor band practice, they could be found, each in some dimly lighted, secluded nook about the north or west piazza or on the steps leading down to the "Chain Battery Walk," sometimes surrounded by a squad of cadet friends, but more frequently in murmured *tête-à-tête* with only one cavalier. In the case of Mrs. Frank no member of the corps seemed especially favored She was just the same to every one. In the case of her younger sister—Miss Terriss—there presently developed a dashing young cadet captain who so scientifically conducted his campaign that he headed off almost all competitors and was presently accorded the lead under the universally accepted theory that he had won the little lady's heart. Observant women—and what women are not observant—of each other?—declared both sisters to be desperate flirts. Society at the Point frowned upon them and, after the first formal call or two, dropped them entirely—a thing they never seemed to resent in the least, or even to notice. They were never invited out to tea

or dinner on the post—solemn functions nowhere near so palatable as the whispered homage of stalwart young manhood. "Nita is yet such a child she infinitely prefers cadet society, and I always did like boys," explained Mrs. Garrison. Some rather gay old boys used to run up Saturday afternoons on the Mary Powell and spend Sunday at the Point—Wall Street men of fifty years and much lucre. "Dear old friends of father's," Mrs. Frank used to say, "and I've simply got to entertain them." Entertained they certainly were, for her wit and vivacity were acknowledged on every side, and entertained not only collectively, but severally, for she always managed to give each his hour's confidential chat, and on the Sundays of their coming had no time to spare for cadet friends. Moreover, she always drove down in the big 'bus with them Monday morning when the Powell was sighted coming along that glorious reach from Polopel's Island, and stood at the edge of the wharf waving her tiny kerchief—even blowing fairy kisses to them as they steamed away. No wonder Nita Terriss was

frivolous and flirtatious with such an example, said society, and its frowns grew blacker when the White Sisters, the Fairy Sisters—the "Sylphites," came in view. But frowns and fulminations both fell harmless from the armor of Mrs. Frank's gay *insouçiance.* Nita winced at first, but soon rallied and bore the slights of the permanent and semi-permanent residents as laughingly as did her more experienced sister. Nita, it was explained, was only just out of school, and Mrs. Frank was giving her this summer at the Point as a great treat before taking her to the far West, where the elder sister must soon go to join her husband. Everybody knew Frank Garrison. He had long been stationed at the Academy, and was a man universally liked and respected—even very highly regarded. All of a sudden the news came back to the Point a few month afters his return to his regiment that he was actually engaged to "Witchie" Terris. Hot on the heels of the rumor came the wedding cards—Lieutenant-Colonel and Mrs. Terriss requested the honour of your presence at the marriage of their

daughter Margaret to Lieutenant Francis Key Garrison, —th U. S. Cavalry, at the Post Chapel, Fort Riley, Kansas, November —,1894 —all in Tiffany's best style, as were the cards which accompanied the invitation. "What a good thing for old Bill Terriss!" said everybody who knew that his impecuniosity was due to the exactions and extravagancies of his wife and "Witchie."—"And what a bad thing for Frank Garrison!" was the echo. His intimates knew that he had "put by" through economy and self-denial about two thousand dollars, the extent of his fortune outside of his pay. "She'll make ducks and drakes of it in the six weeks' honeymoon," was the confident prophecy, and she probably did, for, despite the fact that he had so recently rejoined the regiment, "Witchie" insisted on a midwinter run to New Orleans, Savannah and Washington, and bore her lord, but not her master, over the course in triumph. To a student of human nature—and frailty—that union of a faded and somewhat shopworn maid of twenty-seven to an ardent and vigorous young soldier many moons her

junior was easy to account for. One after another Witchie Terriss had had desperate affairs with half a dozen fellows, older or younger, in the army and was known to have been engaged to five different men at different times, and believed to have been engaged to two different men at one time. Asked as to this by one of her chums she was reported to have replied: "Do you know, I believe it true; I had totally forgotten about Ned Colston before Mr. Forman had been at the post a week. Of course the only thing to do was to break with both and let them start fresh." But this Mr. Colston, whose head had been somewhat cleared by a month of breezy, healthful scouting, accepted only in part—that part which included the break. Forman had the fresh start and a walk over and held the trophy just two months, when it dawned upon him that Margaret loved dancing far more than she did him—a clumsy performer, and that she would dance night after night, the lightest, daintiest creature in the hop room, and never have a word or a look for him who leaned in gloomy admiration against the

wall and never took his eyes off her. He became jealous, moody, ugly-tempered and finally had the good luck to get his *congé* as the result of an attempt to assert himself and limit her dances. She was blithe and radiant and fancy free when Frank Garrison reached the post, a wee bit hipped, it was whispered, because of the failure of a somewhat half-hearted suit of his in the far East, and the Fairy bounded into the darkness of his life and fairly dazzled him. Somebody had said Frank Garrison had money.

There is no need to tell of the disillusion that gradually came. Frank found his debts mounting up and his cares increasing. She was all sympathy and regret when he mentioned it, but—there were certain comforts, luxuries and things she had always been accustomed to, and couldn't live without. Surely he would not have her apply to papa. No, but—could she not manage with a little less? He was willing to give up his cigars (indeed, he had long since done so) and to make his uniforms last a year longer—he who was in his

day the most carefully dressed man at the Point. Well—she thought perhaps he ought to do that—besides—men's fashions changed but slowly, whereas women's— "Well, I'd rather be dead than out of style, Frank!"

And so it went.

But if she did not love her husband there was one being in whom her frivolous heart was really bound up—Nita—her "baby sister," as she called her, and when Terriss, the colonel, went the way of all flesh, preceded only a few months by the wife of his bosom, the few thousands in life insurance he had managed to maintain went to the two daughters. Not one penny was ever laid out in payment of the debts of either the father or husband. Nita was sent to an extravagant finishing school in Gotham, and along in May of the young girl's graduating year, blithe little Mrs. Garrison arrived, fresh from the far West, and after a few weeks of sightseeing and shopping the sisters appeared at the Point, even half-mourning by this time discarded. Thirteen years difference was there in the ages of the Fairy Sisters,

and not a soul save those who knew them in former days on the frontier would have suspected it. Mrs. Frank in evening dress didn't look over twenty.

One lovely evening early in August, just about the time that Cadet Captain Latrobe began to show well to the front in the run for the prize, the two sisters had gone to their room at the hotel to dress for the hop. It was their custom to disappear from public gaze about six o'clock and when they came floating down the stairs in filmy, diaphanous clouds of white, the halls were well filled with impatient cavaliers in the natty cadet uniform, and with women "waiting to see." Then the sisters would go into the dining room and have some light refreshment, with a glass of iced tea—and no matter how torrid the heat or how flushed and dragged other women might look, they were inviting pictures of all that was ever fresh, cool and fragrant. The two fluffy blonde heads would be huddled close together a minute as they studied the bill of fare, and virtuous matrons at other tables, fanning vigorously, would

sniff and say: "All for effect. They know that supper bill by heart. It never changes." All the same, at the bottom of this public display of sisterly devotion and harmony and in spite of occasional tiffs and differences, there was genuine affection on both sides, for as a child Nita had adored Margaret, and there could be no doubting the elder's love for the child. Some regimental observers said that every bit of heart that eldest Terriss girl had was wrapped up in the little one. Neither girl, even after Margaret's marriage, would listen to a word in disparagement of the other, but in the sanctity of the sisterly retreat on the third floor of the old hotel there occurred sometimes spirited verbal tilts that were quite distinctly audible to passers-by in the corridor, provided they cared to listen, which some of them did. On this especial August evening Mrs. Frank was in an admonitory frame of mind. They had known Mr. Latrobe barely three weeks, and yet as Mrs. Frank was sauntering around a turn in Flirtation Walk, leaning on the arm of the cadet adjutant, there in the pathway

right ahead stood Nita, a lovely little picture with downcast eyes, and "Pat" Latrobe bending over her with love and passion glowing in his handsome face, pleading eagerly, clinging fervently to both her tiny, white-gloved hands. Mrs. Garrison saw it all in the flash of a second, the adjutant not at all, for with merry laughter she repeated some words he had just spoken as though they were about the wittiest, funniest things in the world,and looked frankly up into his eyes as though he were the best and brightest man she had met in years—so his eyes were riveted, and the tableau had time to dissolve. All the same that sight gave Mrs. Garrison rather more than a bad quarter of an hour. She was infinitely worried. Not because Pat Latrobe had fallen desperately in love with her charming little sister— that was his lookout—but what—oh, what might not happen if the charming little sister were to fall in love with that handsome soldier boy. At all hazards, even if she had to whisk her away tomorrow, that had to be stopped, and this very evening when they went to their room Margaret spoke.

"Nita, if it were only for Mr. Latrobe I should not care a snap of my finger, but it's you—*you!* I thought you had more sense. I thought you *fully* understood that you couldn't afford to lose yourself a moment, and yet if ever a girl *looked* like yielding you did this very afternoon. For my sake, for your own sake, Nita, don't let it go any further—*don't* fall in love—here—whatever you do."

The younger sister stood at the dressing table at the moment, her face averted. The Mary Powell was just rounding the Point, and the mellow, melodious notes of her bell were still echoing through the Highlands. Nita was gazing out on the gorgeous effect of sunset light and shadow on the eastern cliffs and crags across the Hudson, a flush as vivid mantling her cheeks, her lip quivering. She was making valiant efforts to control herself before replying.

"I'm *not* in love with him," she finally said.

"Perhaps not—yet. Surely I hope not, but it looked awfully like it was coming—and Nita, you simply mustn't. You've got to marry

money if I have to stand guard over you and see you do it—and you know you can this minute—if you'll only listen."

The younger girl wheeled sharply, her eyes flashing. "Peggy, you promised me I shouldn't hear that hateful thing again—at least not until we left here—and you've broken your word—twice. You——"

"It's because I must. I can't see you drifting—the way I did when, with your youth and —advantages you can pick and choose. Colonel Frost has mines and money all over the West, and he was your shadow at the seashore, and all broken up—he told me—so when we came here. Paddy Latrobe is a beautiful boy without a penny—"

"His uncle—" began Nita feebly.

"His uncle had a sister to support besides Paddy's mother. His pay as brigadier in the regular service is only fifty-five hundred. He *can't* have saved much of anything in the past, and he may last a dozen years yet—or more. Even if he does leave everything then to Latrobe, what'll you do meantime? Don't be a

fool, Nita, because I was. I *had* to be. It was that or nothing, and father was getting tired. *You* heard how he talked."

The younger sister was still at the dressing-table diligently brushing her shining, curly tresses. She had regained her composure and was taking occasional furtive peeps at Mrs. Frank, now seated at the foot of the bed, busy with a buttonhook and the adjustment of a pair of very dainty boots of white kid, whose buttons gleamed like pearls. The mates to them, half a size smaller, peeped from the tray of Nita's new trunk.

There came a footstep and a rap at the door. "See what it is, Nita, there's a love—I don't want to hop."

It was a card—a new arrival at the hotel.

"Gentleman said he'd wait in the parlor 'm," said the bellboy, and vanished. Nita glanced at the card and instant trouble stood in her paling face. Silently Mrs. Garrison held out her hand, took the card, and one quick look. The buttonhook dropped from her relaxed fingers. The card read:

"Mr. Gouverneur Prime."

For a second or two the sisters gazed at each other in silence.

At last the elder spoke: "In heaven's name, what brings that absurd boy back here? I thought him safe in Europe."

CHAPTER IX.

ONE of the most charming writers of our day and generation has declared that "the truest blessing a girl can have" is "the ingenuous devotion of a young boy's heart." Nine mothers in ten will probably take issue with the gifted author on that point, and though no longer a young girl in years whatever she might be in looks, Margaret Garrison would gladly have sent the waiting gentlemen to the right about, for, though he was only twenty, "Gov" Prime, as a junior at Columbia, had been ingenuously devoted to the little lady from the very first evening he saw her. A boy of frank, impulsive nature was "Gov"—a boy still in spite of the budding mustache, the twenty summers and the barely passed "exam" that wound up the junior year and entitled him to sit with the seniors when the great university opened its doors in October. Studies he hated, but tennis,

polo, cricket, riding and dancing were things he loved and excelled in. Much of his boyhood had been spent at one of those healthy, hearty English schools where all that would cultivate physical and mental manhood was assiduously practiced, and all that would militate against them was as rigorously "tabooed."

At the coming of his twentieth birthday that summer his father had handed him his check for five thousand dollars—the paternal expression of satisfaction that his boy had never smoked pipe, cigar or cigarette—and the same week "Gov" had carried off the blue ribbon with the racquet, and the second prize with the single sculls. It was during the "exams," the first week in June, when dropping in for five o'clock tea on some girls whom he had known for years, he was presented to this witching little creature whose name he didn't even catch. "We met her away out at an army post in Wyoming when papa took us to California last year," was whispered to him, "and they entertained us so cordially, and of course we said if ever you come to New York you must be sure to let

us know—and she did—but—" and there his informant paused, dubious. Other callers came in and it began to rain—a sudden, drenching shower, and the little stranger from the far West saw plainly enough that her hostesses, though presenting their friends after our cheery American fashion, were unable to show her further attention, and the newly presented—almost all women, said "so very pleased" but failed to look it, or otherwise to manifest their pleasure. She *couldn't* go in the rain. The butler had 'phoned for a cab. She wouldn't sit there alone and neglected. She deliberately signaled Mr. Prime. "The ladies are all busy," she said, with a charmingly appealing smile, "but I know you can tell me. I have to dress for dinner after I get home, and must be at One Hundred and Tenth Street at 7:30. How long will it take a carriage to drive me there? Oh, is that your society pin? Why, are *you* still in college? Why, I thought——"

That cab was twenty-five minutes coming, and when it came Mr. Prime went with it and her, whom he had not left an instant from the

moment of her question. Moreover, he discovered she was nervous about taking that carriage drive all alone away up to One Hundred and Tenth Street, yet what other way could a girl go in dinner dress. He left her at her door with a reluctantly given permission to return in an hour and escort her to the distant home of her friends and entertainers. He drove to the Waldorf and had a light dinner with a half pint of Hock, devoured her with his eyes as they drove rapidly northward, went to a Harlem theater while she dined and forgot him, and was at the carriage door when she came forth to be driven home. Seven hours or less "had done the business," so far as Gouverneur Prime was concerned.

It was the boy's first wild infatuation—as mad, unreasoning, absurd, yet intense as was ever that of Arthur Pendennis for the lovely Fotheringay. Margaret Garrison had never seen or known the like of it. She had fascinated others for a time, had kindled love, passion and temporary devotion, but this—this was worship, and it was something so sweet to her

jaded senses, something so rich and spontaneous that she gave herself up for a day or two to the delight of studying it. Here was a glorious young athlete whose eyes followed her every move and gesture, who hung about her in utter captivation, whose voice trembled and whose eyes implored, yet whose strong, brown, shapely hand never dared so much as touch hers, except when she extended it in greeting. He was to accompany his father and sister to Europe in a week, so what harm was there: He would forget all about it. He knew now she was married. He was presented to Nita, but had hardly a word and never a look for her when Margaret was near. He was dumb and miserable all the day they drove in the park and later dined at Delmonico's with Colonel Frost. He was sick, even when mounted on his favorite English thoroughbred and scampering about the bridle-path for peeps at the drives, when she was at the park again with that gray-haired reprobate, that money shark, Cashton—a Wall Street broker black-balled at every decent club in New York. Why should she go with him?

He had been most kind, she said, in the advice and aid he had given her in the investment of her little fortune. She told the lie with downcast eyes and cheeks that burned, for most of that little fortune was already frittered away, and Cashton's reports seemed to require many personal visits that had set tongues wagging at the hotel, so much frequented of the Army, where she had taken a room until Nita should have been graduated and they could go to the seashore. She had promised to be at home to her boy adorer that very evening and to go with him to Daly's, and he had secured the seats four days ahead. Poor "Gov" had trotted swiftly home from the park, striving to comfort himself over his bath and irreproachable evening clothes, that *there*, with her by his side, the wild jealousy of the day would vanish. Sharply on time he had sent up his card and listened, incredulous, to the reply: "Mrs. Garrison has not yet returned." He would wait, he said, and did wait, biting his nails, treading the floor, fuming in doubt and despair until nearly ten, when a carriage dashed up to the

ladies' entrance and that vile Cashton handed her out, escorted her in and vanished. She came hurrying to her boy lover with both little hands outstretched, with a face deeply flushed and words of pleading and distress rushing from her lips. "Indeed I could not help it, Gov," she cried. "I told him of my engagement and said we must not go so far, but away at the north end something happened, I don't know what, a wheel was bent and the harness wrenched by too short a turn on a stone post at a corner. Something had to be repaired. They said it wouldn't take ten minutes, and he led me out and up to the piazza of that big hotel—you know, we saw it the day I drove with you—" ("He was a blackguard to take you there!" burst in Prime, the blood boiling in his veins.) "Then we waited and waited and he went to hurry them, and then he came back and said they had found more serious damages —that it would take an hour, and meantime dinner had been ordered and was served. He had telephoned to you and the butler had answered all right." "He's a double-dyed liar!"

raved "Gov," furiously. "And so what could I do, Gov? The dinner was delicious, but I couldn't eat a mouthful." (This time it wasn't Cashton who lied). "I was worrying about you, and—and—about myself, too, Gov. I had set my heart on going with you. It was to be almost our last evening. Oh, if you only didn't have to sail Saturday, and could be here next week, you dear boy, you should have no cause for complaint! Won't you try to forgive me?"

And, actually, tears stood in her eyes, as again she held out both hands. They were the only people in the parlor, and in an instant, with quick, sudden, irresistible action he had clasped and drawn her to his breast, and though she hid her face and struggled, passionate kisses were printed on her disheveled hair. It was the first time he had dared.

And then he did not sail Saturday. Prime Senior was held by most important business. They gave up the Saturday Cunarder and took the midweek White Star, and those four additional days riveted poor "Gov's" chains

and left her well-nigh breathless with excitement. The strain had been intense. It was all she could do to make the boy try to behave in a rational way in the presence of others. When alone with her he raved. A fearful load was lifted from her spare little shoulders when the Teutonic sailed. Even Nita had worried and had seen her sister's worry. Then no sooner did "Gov" reach Europe than he began writing impassioned letters by every steamer, but that wasn't so bad. She had several masculine correspondents, some of whom wrote as often as Frank, but none of whom, to do her justice, got letters as often as he did, which, however, was saying little, for she hated writing. "Gov" was to have stayed abroad three months, piloting the pater and sister about the scenes so familiar to him, but they saw how nervous and unhappy he was. They knew he was writing constantly to some one. Mildred had long since divined that there was a girl at the bottom of it all, and longed and strove to find out who she was. Through the last of June and all through July he resolutely stood to his

promise and did his best to be loving and brotherly to a loving and devoted sister and dutiful to a most indulgent father. But he grew white and worn and haggard, he who had been such a picture of rugged health, and, in her utter innocence and ignorance as to the being on whom her brother had lavished the wealth of his love, Mildred began to ask herself should she not urge her father to let "Gov" return to America. At last, one sweet July evening, late in the month, the brother and sister were wandering along the lovely shore of Lucerne. He had been unusually fitful, restless and moody all day. No letter had reached him in over a fortnight, and he was miserably unhappy. They stopped at a grassy bank that ran down to the rippling water's edge, and she seated herself on a stone ledge, while in reckless abandonment he threw himself full length on the dewy grass. Instantly the last doubt vanished. Bending over him, her soft hand caressing his hair, she whispered: "Gov, dear boy, is it so very hard? Would you like to go to her at once?"

And the boy buried his face in her lap, twined his arms about her slender waist, and almost groaned aloud as he answered. "For pity's sake help me if you can, Mildred, I'm almost mad."

Early in August the swiftest steamer of the line was splitting the Atlantic surges and driving hard for home, with "Gov" cursing her for a canal boat. The day after he reached New York he had traced and followed the White Sisters to West Point, and Margaret Garrison stared in mingled delight triumph and dismay at the card in her hand. Delight that she could show these exclusive P nters that the heir to one of the oldest and best names in Gotham's Four Hundred was a slave to her beck and call. Dismay to think of the scene that might occur through his jealousy when he saw the devoted attentions she received from so many men—officers, civilians and cadets. Old Cashton came up now as regularly as Saturday night came around—and there were others. Margaret Garrison was more talked about than any woman in Orange County, yet, who could report

anything of her beyond that she was a universal favorite, and danced, walked, possibly flirted with a dozen different cavaliers every day of her life? There were some few among her accusers, demure and most proper—even prudish—women, of whom, were the truth to be told, so little could not be said.

"Gov" Prime took the only kind of room to be had in the house, so full was it—a little seven by ten box on the office floor. He would have slept in the coal bin rather than leave her. He saw her go off to the hop looking radiant, glancing back over her shoulder and smiling sweetly at him. He rushed to his trunk, dragged out his evening clothes, and stood at the wall looking on until the last note of the last dance—he a noted German leader in the younger set and the best dancer of his years in Gotham. Not so much as a single spin had he, and he longed to show those tight-waisted, button-bestrewed fellows in gray and white how little they really knew about dancing well as many of them appeared on the floor. His reward was tendered as the hop broke up. She

came gliding to him with such witchery in her upraised face. "Now, sir, it is your turn. I couldn't give you a dance, for my card was made out days ago, but Mr. Latrobe was glad enough to get rid of taking me home. He is daft about Nita, and of course she *can't* let him take her to more than one hop a week. Mr. Stanton is her escort to-night."

Then she placed her little hand on his arm, and drew herself to his side, and when he would have followed the others, going straight across the broad plain to the lights at the hotel, turned him to the left. "I'm going to take you all the way round, sir," she said joyously. "Then we can be by ourselves at least ten minutes longer."

And so began the second period of Gouverneur Prime's thralldom. A young civilian at the Point has few opportunities at any time, but when the lady of his love is a belle in the corps, he would much better take a long ocean voyage than be where he could hear and see, and live in daily torment. One comfort came to him when he could not be with Mrs. Garrison

(who naïvely explained that "Gov" was such a dear boy and they were such stanch friends, real comrades, you know). He had early made the acquaintance of Pat Latrobe, and there was a bond of sympathy between them which was none the less strong because, on Prime's side, it could neither be admitted nor alluded to—that they were desperately in love with the sisters, and it was not long before it began to dawn on Prime that pretty little Nita was playing a double game—that even while assuring her guardian sister that she had only a mild interest in Latrobe, she was really losing or had lost her heart to him, and in every way in her power was striving to conceal the fact from Margaret, and yet meet her lover at hours when she thought it possible to do so without discovery. As the friendship strengthened between himself and Latrobe they began using him as Cupid's postman, and many little notes and some big ones found their way to and from the Fourth Division of cadet barracks. Mrs. Frank was only moderately kind to her civilian adorer then, granting him only one dance at

each hop, and going much with other men, but that dance was worth seeing. Prime's was the only black "claw-hammer" in the room, and therefore conspicuous, and cadets—who know a good thing when they see it—and many a pretty girl partner, would draw aside to watch the perfection of their step and the exquisite ease with which they seemed to float through space, circling and reversing and winding among the other dancers, he ever alert, watchful, quick as a cat and lithe and strong as a panther—she all yielding lissome airy grace. That dance was "Gov" Prime's reward, and almost only reward for hours of impatient waiting. Other women, charming and pretty and better women, would gladly have been his partners. Some two or three whom he met at the hotel even intimated as much. But not until Lady Garrison told him he must—to protect her from scandal—did he ask another to dance. At last came the end of the summer's encampment, the return of the corps to barracks and studies, one blissful week in which he was enabled to spend several uninterrupted hours each day at

her side, and then a cataclysm. A letter intended only for Nita's hands fell into those of her sister. It was bulky. It was from Latrobe. She hesitated only a moment, then, with determination in her eyes, opened and read—all. Two days after Nita was whisked away to New York, and within another week, leaving two most disconsolate swains on the Hudson, the sisters, one of them bathed in tears, went spinning away to the West, where Frank Garrison was on duty at department headquarters. Prime was permitted to write once a fortnight (he sent a volume), and Latrobe forbidden, but already the poor boy owned a thick packet of precious missives, all breathing fond love and promising utter constancy though she had to wait for him for years. For a month Nita would hardly speak to her sister, but in October there were lovely drives, picnics and gayeties of all kinds. There were attractive young officers and assiduous old ones, and among these latter was Frost, with his handsome gray mustache and distinguished bearing, and that air of conscious success and possession

which some men know so well how to assume even when their chances are slimmer than my lady's hand. The sisterly breach was healed before that beautiful month was over. Frost dined at the Garrison's four times a week and drove Miss Nita behind his handsome bays every day or two. In November he asked a question. In December there was an announcement that called forth a score of congratulations around headquarters, and in January the wedding cards went all over the Union—some to West Point—but to Latrobe, who had been looking ill and anxious for six weeks, said his classmates, and falling off fearfully in his studies, said his professors, only a brief note inclosing his letters and begging for hers. At reveille next morning there was no captain to receive the report of roll call from the first sergeant of Company "B." "Where's Latrobe?" sleepily asked the officer of the day of the cadet first lieutenant. "I don' know," was the answer, and to the amaze of Latrobe's roommate, who had gone to bed and to sleep right after taps the night before, they found evidence that

"Pat" had left the post. He had not even made down his bedding. His cadet uniforms were all there, but a suit of civilian clothes, usually in a snug package up the chimney, that had been used several times "running it" to the hotel after taps in August, was now, like its owner, missing. After three days' waiting and fruitless search, the superintendent wired Latrobe's uncle and best friend, old General Drayton, and that was the last seen or heard of "Pat." In the spring and ahead of time his class was graduated without him, for the war with Spain was on. In the spring an irate and long-tried father was upbraiding another only son for persistent failures at college. "Gov Prime will get the sack, not the sheepskin," prophesied his fellows. And then somehow, somewhere the father heard it was a married woman with whom his boy was so deeply in love, and there were bitter, bitter words on both sides—so bitter that when at last he flung himself out of his father's study Gov Prime went straight to Mildred's room, silently kissed her and walked out of the house. This

was in April. The next heard of him he had enlisted for the war and was gone to San Francisco with his regiment with the prospect of service in the Philippines ahead of him, but that was full four months after his disappearance. Thither, late in July the father followed, bringing Mildred with him and—the reader knows the rest.

CHAPTER X.

ONE of Colonel Frost's consuming ambitions was to be the head of his department, with the rank of brigadier-general, but he had strong rivals, and knew it. Wealth he had in abundance. It was rank and power that he craved. Four men—all with better war records and more experience—stood between him and that coveted star, and two of the four were popular and beloved men. Frost was cold, selfish, intensely self-willed, indomitably persevering, and though "close-fisted," to the scale of a Scotch landlord as a rule, he would loose his purse strings and pay well for services he considered essential. When Frost had a consuming desire he let no money consideration stand in the way, and for Nita Terriss he stood ready to spend a small for'une. Everybody knew Mrs. Frank Garrison could never dress and adorn herself as she did on poor Frank Garri-

son's pay, and when she appeared with a dazzling necklace and a superb new gown at the garrison ball not long after Frost and his shrinking bride left for their honeymoon, people looked at her and then at each other. Nita Terris was sold to "Jack" Frost was the verdict, and her shrewd elder sister was the dealer. Mrs. Frank knew what people were thinking and saying just as well as though they had said it to her, yet smiled sweetness and bliss on every side. Frankly she looked up into the faces of her sisters in arms: "I know you like my necklace. Isn't it *lovely?* Colonel Frost's wedding present, you know. He said I shouldn't give Nita away without some recompense, and this is it."

But that could have been only a part of it, said the garrison. An honorarium in solid cash, it was believed, was far the greater portion of the consideration which the elder sister accepted for having successfully borne Nita away from the dangers and fascinations of the Point—having guarded her, drooping and languid, against the advances of good-looking

soldier lads at headquarters, and finally having, by dint of hours of argument, persuasion and skill, delivered her into the arms of the elderly but well-preserved groom. All he demanded to know was that she was fancy free—that there was no previous attachment, and on this point Mrs. Frank had solemnly averred there was none. The child had had a foolish fancy for a cadet beau, but it amounted to absolutely nothing. There had been no vows, no pledge, no promise of any kind, and she was actually free as air. So Frost was satisfied.

They made an odd-looking pair. Frost was "pony built" but sturdy, and Nita seemed like a fairy—indeed as unsubstantial as a wisp of vapor, as she came down the aisle on his arm. They were so far to the south on this honeymoon trip as almost to feel the shock and concussion when the Maine was blown to a mass of wreckage. They were in Washington when Congress determined on full satisfaction from Spain, and Colonel Frost was told his leave was cut short—that he must return to his station at once. Going first to the Arlington and

hurriedly entering the room, he almost stumbled over the body of his wife, lying close to the door in a swoon from which it took some time and the efforts of the house physician and the maids to restore her. Questioned later as to the cause she wept hysterically and wrung her hands. She didn't know. She had gone to the door to answer a knock, and got dizzy and remembered nothing more. What became of the knocker? She didn't know. Frost inquired at the office. A bellboy was found who said he had taken up a card in an envelope given him by a young feller who "seemed kind o' sick. Mrs. Frost took it and flopped," and a chambermaid ran in to her, and then hurried for the doctor. "What became of the letter or note or card?" asked Frost, with suspicion and jealousy in his heart. Two women, mistress and maid, and the bellboy swore they didn't know, but the maid did know. With the quick intuition of her sex and class she had seen that there was or had been a young lover, and sympathy for Nita and a dislike for Frost, who gave no tips, prompted her to hide it until she

could slip it safely into Nita's hand; Nita who read, shuddered, tore it into minute scraps, and wept more, face downward on the bed. They had reached their winter station before the cable flashed the stirring tidings of Dewey's great victory in Manila Bay, and within half a week came telegraphic orders for Colonel Frost to proceed at once to San Francisco, there to await instructions. The first expedition was organizing when he arrived, his pallid little wife by his side, and there were his instructions to proceed to Manila as chief of his department —an independent position, and yet it was a horrid blow. But there was no recourse. Nita begged that she might stay with her sister. She could not bear the idea of going. Frost knew that no women could accompany the expedition, and, shipping his chest and desks by the transport, he had secured passage for himself and wife to Hongkong on one of the splendid steamers of the English line from Vancouver, and so informed her. It dashed Nita's last hope. They were occupying fine rooms at the Palace Hotel. The city was thronged with

officers and rapidly arriving troops. Other army women, eager to accompany their husbands, were railing at the fate that separated them, and Nita had been forced to conceal the joy with which she heard their lamentations. But she had yet to learn how exacting Frost could be. It had never occurred to her that he could obtain permission to go except by transport. It had not seemed possible that he would take her with him. "You should have known," said he, "that even if I had had to go by transport, you would have gone by the Empress of India. It is only sixty hours from Manila to Hongkong, and I could have joined you soon after your arrival. As it is I shall see you safely established there—I have letters to certain prominent English people—then shall go over to join the fleet when it arrives in Manila Bay."

That night she wrote long and desperately to Margaret. "He swore he would follow me wherever we went until I granted him the interview. You know how he dogged me in Washington, followed me to Denver, and any mo-

ment he may address me here. F. will not let me return to you. He insists on my going to Hongkong, where he can occasionally join me. But Rollin holds those letters over me like a whip, and declares that he will give them into Frost's hands unless I see him whenever he presents himself. You made me swear to Frost I never cared a straw for my darling that was. O God, how I loved him! and if these letters ever reach the man to whom you have sold me, he would treat me as he would a dog, even if he doesn't kill me. Meg—Meg—you must help me for I live in terror."

And that she lived in terror was true, some women were quick to see. Never would she go anywhere, even along the corridor, alone. If the colonel could not come to luncheon she was served in their rooms. If she had to go calling or shopping it was in a carriage and always with some army woman whom she could persuade to go with her.

One day, just before their intended departure, she drove out paying parting calls. It was quite late when the carriage drew up at the

Market Street entrance, the nearest to their elevator. The door boy sprang across the sidewalk to open the carriage, and as she stepped wearily out, a tall young man, erect and slender, dressed in a dark traveling suit, fairly confronted her, raised his derby, and said: "You can give me ten minutes now, Mrs. Frost. Be good enough to take my arm."

Bowing her head she strove to dodge by, but it was useless. Again he confronted her. Piteously she looked up into his pale, stern face and clasped her hands. "Oh, Rollin," she cried, "give me my letters. I dare not—see you. Have mercy—" and down again she went in a senseless heap upon the stone. Colonel and Mrs. Frost did not sail with the Empress of India. Brain fever set in and for three weeks the patient never left the hotel. Frost made his wife's dangerous illness the basis of an application to be relieved from the Manila detail, but, knowing well it would be late summer before the troops could be assembled there in sufficient force to occupy the city, and that his clerks and books had gone by

transport with the second expedition in June, the War Department compromised on a permission to delay. By the time the fourth expedition was ready to start there was no further excuse; moreover, the doctors declared the sea voyage was just what Mrs. Frost needed, and again their stateroom was engaged by the Empress line, and, though weak and languid, Mrs. Frost was able to appear in the dining-room. Meanwhile a vast amount of work was saddled on the department to which Frost was attached, and daily he was called upon to aid the local officials or be in consultation with the commanding general. This would have left Mrs. Frost to the ministrations of her nurse alone, but for the loving kindness of army women in the hotel. They hovered about her room, taking turns in spending the afternoon with her, or the evening, for it was speedily apparent that she had a nervous dread of being left by herself, "or even with her husband," said the most observing. Already it had been whispered that despite his assiduous care and devotion during her illness, something serious

was amiss. Everybody had heard of the adventure which had preceded her alarming illness. Everybody knew that she had been accosted and confronted by a strange young man, at sight of whom she had pleaded piteously a minute and then fainted dead away. By this time, too, there were or had been nearly a dozen of the graduating class in town—classmates of Rollin Latrobe—their much-loved "Pat"—and speedily the story was told of his devotion to her when she was Nita Terriss, of their correspondence, of their engagement to be married on his graduation, which in strict confidence he had imparted to his roommate, who kept it inviolate until after her sudden union with Colonel Frost and poor "Pat's" equally sudden disappearance. Everybody, Frost included, knew that the young man who had accosted her must be Latrobe, and Frost by this time knew that it must have been he who caused her shock at the Arlington. He raged in his jealous heart. He employed detectives to find the fellow, swearing he would have him arrested. He became morose and gloomy, for

all the arts by which Mrs. Garrison persuaded him that Nita looked up to him with admiration and reverence that would speedily develop into wifely love were now proved to be machinations. He knew that Nita feared him, shrank from him and was very far from loving him, and he believed that despite her denials and fears and protestations she loved young Latrobe. He wrote angrily, reproachfully to Margaret, who, now that her fish was hooked, did not greatly exert herself to soothe or reassure him. That he could ever use violence to one so sweet and fragile as Nita she would not believe for an instant. Then the nurse, still retained, heard bitter words from the colonel as one morning she came to the door with Mrs. Frost's breakfast, and while she paused, uncertain about entering at such a time, he rushed angrily forth and nearly collided with her. Mrs. Frost was in tears when the nurse finally entered, and the breakfast was left untouched.

Late that afternoon, just after the various trunks and boxes of the Frosts that were to go by the transport were packed and ready, and

Mrs. Frost, looking stronger at last, though still fragile, almost ethereal, was returning from a drive with one of her friends, the attention of the two ladies was drawn to a crowd gathering rapidly on the sidewalk not far from the Baldwin Hotel. There was no shouting, no commotion, nothing but the idle curiosity of men and boys, for a young soldier, a handsome, slender, dark-eyed, dark-complexioned fellow of twenty-one or two, had been arrested by a patrol and there they stood, the sergeant and his two soldiers fully armed and equipped, the hapless captive with his arms half filled with bundles, and over the heads of the little throng the ladies could see that he was pleading earnestly with his captors, and that the sergeant, though looking sympathetic and far from unkind, was shaking his head. Mrs. Frost, listless and a little fatigued, had witnessed too many such scenes in former days of garrison life to take any interest in the proceeding. "How stupid these people are!" she irritably exclaimed. "Running like mad and blocking the streets to see a soldier arrested for absence

from camp without a pass. Shan't we drive on?"

"Oh—just one moment, please, Mrs. Frost. He has such a nice face—a gentleman's face, and he seems so troubled. Do look at it!"

Languidly and with something very like a pout, Mrs. Frost turned her face again toward the sidewalk, but by this time the sergeant had linked an arm in that of the young soldier and had led him a pace or two away, so that his back was now toward the carriage. He was still pleading, and the crowd had begun to back him up, and was expostulating, too.

"Awe, take him where he says, sergeant, and let him prove it."

"Don't be hard on him, man. If he's taking care of a sick friend give 'm a chance."

Then the sergeant tried to explain matters. "I can't help myself, gentlemen," said he; "orders are orders, and mine are to find this recruit and fetch him back to camp. He's two days over time now."

"Oh, I wish I knew what it meant!" anxiously exclaimed Mrs. Frost's companion.

"I'm sure he needs help." Then with sudden joy in her eyes—"Oh, good! There goes Colonel Crosby. He'll see what's amiss," and as she spoke a tall man in the fatigue uniform of an officer of infantry shouldered his way through the crowd, and reached the blue-coated quartette in the center. Up went the hands to the shouldered rifles in salute, and the young soldier, the cause of all the gathering which the police were now trying to disperse, whirled quickly, and with something suspiciously like tears in his fine dark eyes, was seen to be eagerly speaking to the veteran officer. There was a brief colloquy, and then the colonel said something to the sergeant at which the crowd set up a cheer. The sergeant looked pleased, the young soldier most grateful, and away went the four along the sidewalk, many of the throng following.

And then the colonel caught sight of the ladies in the carriage, saw that one was signaling eagerly, and heard his name called. Hastening to their side, he raised his cap and smiled acordial greeting.

"Oh, I'm so glad you came, colonel, we are so interested in that young soldier. Do tell us what it all means. Oh! I beg your pardon, Mrs. Frost, I surely thought you had met Colonel Crosby—let me pre— Why, Nita! What's— Are you ill? Here, take my salts, quick!"

"No—no—go on—I—I want to hear! Where are they taking him?" faintly murmured Mrs. Frost."

"Try to control yourself," said her companion. "I'll tell you in one moment." Meantime from without the carriage the colonel continued, addressing Nita's companion:

"He tells a perfectly straight story. He says he has an old friend who is here so desperately ill and out of money that he got a doctor for him and had been nursing him himself. Those things he carried are medicines and wine that the doctor bade him buy. All he asks is to take them to his friend's room and get a nurse, then he is ready to go to camp and stand his trial, so I told the sergeant I'd be responsible."

"Oh, thank you so much! Do see that the

poor fellow isn't punished. We'll drive right round. Perhaps we can do something. It is Red Cross business, you know. *Good*-afternoon, colonel. Please tell our driver to follow them."

But, to her consternation, no sooner had they started than she felt Nita's trembling hand grasping her wrist, and turning quickly saw that she was in almost hysterical condition.

"My poor child, I had forgotten you were so worn out. I'll take you home at once—but then we'll miss them entirely. Oh, could you bear——"

"Oh! No! No!" moaned Nita, wringing her little hands. "Take me—anywhere. No! Take me home—take me home! and promise me not to—not to tell my husband what we saw."

CHAPTER XI.

For a man ordinarily absorbed in his own command, Colonel Stanley Armstrong had become, all on a sudden, deeply engrossed in that of Colonel Canker. The Frosts had been gone a week, via Vancouver—the expedition only about sixteen hours—when he appeared at Gordon's tent and frankly asked to be told all that tall Southerner knew of the young soldier Morton, now gone from camp for the third, and, as Armstrong believed, the last time.

"Why, that young fella's a bawn gentleman," drawled Gordon, as he offered the colonel a chair and cigar. "He was behavin' tip top, steady as you please until about a month ago. He's only been with us since the first of May—came with a big batch of recruits —a regular athlete, you know. Then after he'd drilled awhile I nailed him for headquarters clerk. I never knew him to be off an hour until

about four weeks ago. The men say another young fella came out here one night, had a talk with Morton, and they went out together. He got regular permission. Nobody has set eyes on his friend out here since that time, but Morton got three passes to town in ten days, and Squeers happened to want him, and gave orders *he* should have to be consulted hereafter. 'Bout a fortnight since, by Jove, Morton lit out suddenly and was gone forty-eight hours, and was brought back by a patrol, perfectly straight, and he said he had to go on account of a friend who had been taken very ill and was a stranger here. Squeers let him off with a warning, and inside of three days he begged for a twenty-four-hour pass, and Squeers wouldn't give it. He went without it, by George! It was just about the time the Prime family arrived, looking up the boy they heard was in your regiment. This time there was big trouble. The patrol sent for him went directly to the lodgings of his sick friend, and there they found him and he laid out two of our best men for forcing a way into the room. They told me your carri-

age nearly ran over him the day of the review. Then came that dam fool charge about his being mixed up in this robbery. Then his escape from under Billy Gray's nose, by George, and that's the last of him. Canker sent a party in to look him up at the usual place, and both birds had flown, both, by George! The sick man was well enough to be driven off in a carriage, and there's nothing further to tell as yet."

"I wish I had known about him earlier—before the Primes came," said Armstrong thoughtfully, knocking the ashes off his cigar. "Of course you divine my theory?"

"That Morton's the missing son and heir? Of course. Now that I've seen Miss Prime the family resemblance is strong. But if he wanted to soldier, what's to prevent. Those tents yawnduh are full of youngsters better educated than I am," and Gordon arose, tangling a long, lean leg in the nearest campstool, which he promptly kicked through the doorway into the sailing fog outside. It was barely eleven o'clock, but already the raw, wet wind was

whistling in over the barren, sandy slopes and dunes, and the moisture dripped in big drops from the sloped rifles of the men marching sturdily in from drill.

"Yawnduh comes the Prime carriage now, by George," continued the adjutant, as he limped to the entrance. "Ole man seems all broke up, don't he?" Armstrong had promptly risen and came striding to his comrade's side.

"Naturally," was the answer. "He had hoped much from this visit. The boy was just under twenty-one when he enlisted, and, as his father's consent was lacking, a discharge could have been ordered. It may have been fear of that that drove the youngster off. Where is the carriage—and your glass?" continued the colonel, looking about until he found a binocular.

"Comin' right down the road back of the officers' tents. Reckon it's another visit of condolence to Gray. You know I shouldn't wonduh if this arrest of his proved a blessin' in disguise for that lucky boy."

No reply coming to this observation, Gordon

glanced over his shoulder. Armstrong was replacing the glasses. Again the adjutant hazarded.

"I—I was sayin' this arrest may be, after all, the biggest kind of blessing in disguise for that lucky Billy. *Yes*, by Jove! They're comin' to his tent. *That's* a splendid girl, ole man!"

"Miss—Prime, you mean?" calmly queried Armstrong, striking match after match in the effort to light a fresh cigar, his face averted.

"Miss Prime I *don't* mean," answered Gordon, glancing curiously at the senior officer. "Not but that she's a most charming young lady and all that," he hurriedly interpolated, Southern chivalry asserting itself. Then with a twitch about the lip: "By the way, ole man, those cigars light better from the other end. Take a fresh one."

Armstrong quickly withdrew the ill-used weed from between his strong, white teeth, gave it one glance, and a toss into the waste-basket.

"No, I've smoked enough. But how can

they see him? How about that sentry over Gray's tent?"

"Huh! Chief made him take it off directly he heard of it," grinned Gordon. "Moses! But didn't Squeers blaspheme!" And the adjutant threw his head back and laughed joyously over the retrospect. "Yes, there's that curly pate of Billy's at the tent door now. Reckon he was expectin' 'em. There they are, ole Prime, too. Don't be in a hurry, colonel."

They had known each other years, these two, and it had been "Armstrong" and "Gordon" when they addressed each other, or "ole man" when Gordon lapsed into the semi-affectionate. To the adjutant's Southern sense of military propriety "ole man" was still possible. "Armstrong" would be a soldierly solecism.

"I am to see the General before noon," said Armstrong gravely, "and it's time I started. If you should hear of your runaway let me know. If you shouldn't, keep our views to yourself. There's no use in rousing false hopes." With that Armstrong turned up the collar of his overcoat and lunged out into the mist.

Gordon watched him as he strode away, the orderly following at the conventional distance. The shortest way to general headquarters was up the row of company officers' tents in front of the still incarcerated Billy; the longest was around back of the mess tent and kitchen. Armstrong took the latter.

That escape of prisoners was still the talk of camp. Men had come by battalions to see the tunnel, observing which Canker promptly ordered it closed up. Opinion was universal that Canker should have released the officers and men he had placed under arrest at once, but he didn't. In his bottled wrath he hung on to them until the brigade commander took a hand and ordered it. Canker grumblingly obeyed so far as the sergeant and sentries were concerned, but entered stout protest as to Gray.

"I still hold that officer as having knowledge of the scheme and aiding and abetting. I can prove that he telephoned for that carriage," he said.

"At least there's nothing to warrant the posting of that sentry at Mr. Gray's tent, Colonel

Canker," said the brigadier, with some asperity. "Order him off at once. That's all for to-day, sir," and the man with the starred shoulders "held over" him with the silver leaves. The latter could only obey—and objurgate.

But Canker's knuckles came in for another rasping within the hour. The brigadier being done with him, the division commander's compliments came over per orderly, and would the colonel please step to the General's tent. Canker was fuming to get to town. He was possessed with insane desire to follow up that boarding house clue. He believed the landlady could be bullied into telling where her boarder was taken, and what manner of man (or woman) he was. But down he had to go, three blocks of camp, to where the tents of division headquarters were pitched, and there sat the veteran commander, suave and placid as ever.

"Ah, colonel, touching that matter of the robbery of your commissary stores. Suspicion points very strongly to your Sergeant Foley.

Do you think it wise to have no sentry over him?"

"Why—General," said Canker, "I've known that man fifteen years—in fact, I got him ordered to duty here," and the colonel bristled.

"Well—pardon me, colonel, but you heard the evidence against him last night, or at least heard of it. Don't you consider that conclusive?"

Canker cleared his throat and considered as suggested.

"I heard the allegation sir, but—he made so clear an explanation to *me*, at least—and besides, General"—a bright idea occurring to him —"you know that as commissary sergeant he is not under my command——"

"Tut, tut, colonel," interrupted the General, waxing impatient. "The storehouse adjoins your camp. Your sentries guard it. Captain Hanford, the commissary, says he called on you last night to notify you that he had placed the sergeant under arrest, but considered the case so grave that he asked that a sentry be placed over him, and it wasn't done."

"I dislike very much to inflict such indignity on deserving soldiers, General," said Canker, stumbling into a self-made trap. "Until their guilt is established they are innocent under the law."

"Apparently you apply a different rule in case of officers," calmly responded the General, "*vide* Mr. Gray. No further words are necessary. Oblige me by having that sentry posted at once. Good-morning, sir."

But to Canker's dismay the officer of the guard made prompt report. The sentry was sent, but the sergeant's tent was empty. The colonel's pet had flown. This meant more trouble for the colonel.

Meantime Stanley Armstrong had hied him to General Drayton's headquarters. The office tents were well filled with clerks, orderlies, aides and other officers who had come in on business, but this meeting was by appointment, and after brief delay the camp commander excused himself to those present and ushered Armstrong into his own private tent, the scene of the merry festivities the evening of Mrs.

Harrison's unexpected arrival. There the General turned quickly on his visitor with the low-toned question.

"Well—what have you found?"

"Enough to give me strong reason for believing that Morton, so-called, is young Prime, and that your nephew is with him, sir."

The old soldier's sad eyes lighted with sudden hope. Yet, as he passed his hand wearily over his forehead, the look of doubt and uncertainty slowly returned. "It accounts for the letters reaching me here," he said, "but—I've known that boy from babyhood, Armstrong, and a more intense nature I have never heard of. What he starts in to do he will carry out if it kills him." And Drayton looked drearily about the tent as though in search of something, he didn't quite know what. Then he settled back slowly into his favorite old chair. "Do sit down, Armstrong. I want to speak with you a moment." Yet it was the colonel who was the first to break the silence.

"May I ask if you have had time to look at any of the letters, sir?"

"Do I look as though I had time to do *anything*?" said the chief, dropping his hands and uplifting a lined and haggard face, yet so refined. "Anything but work, work, morn, noon and night. The mass of detail one has to meet here is something appalling. It weighs on me like a nightmare, Armstrong. No, I was worn out the night after the package reached me. When next I sought it the letters were gone."

"How long was that, General?"

Again the weary hands, with their long, tapering fingers, came up to the old soldier's brow. He pondered a moment. "It must have been the next afternoon, I think, but I can't be sure.

"And you had left them——?"

"In the inside pocket of that old overcoat of mine, hanging there on the rear tent pole," was the answer, as the General turned half-round in his chair and glanced wistfully, self-reproachfully thither.

Armstrong arose, and going to the back of the tent, made close examination. The canvas

home of the chief was what is known as the hospital tent, but instead of being pitched with the ordinary ridgepole and uprights, a substantial wooden frame and floor had first been built and over this the stout canvas was stretched, stanch and taut as the head of a drum. It was all intact and sound. Whoever filched that packet made way with it through the front, and that, as Armstrong well knew, was kept tightly laced, as a rule, from the time the General left it in the morning until his return. It was never unlaced except in his presence or by his order. Then the deft hands of the orderlies on duty would do the trick in a twinkling. Knowing all this, the colonel queried further:

You went in town, as I remember, late that evening and called on the Primes and other people at the Palace. I think I saw you in the supper room. There was much merriment at your table. Mrs. Garrison seemed to be the life of the party. Now, you left your overcoat with the boy at the cloak stand?"

"No, Armstrong, that's the odd part of it. I

only used the cape that evening. The coat was hanging at its usual place when I returned late, with a mass of new orders and papers. No! no! But here, I must get back to the office, and what I wished you to see was that poor boy's letter. What can you hope with a nature like that to deal with?"

Armstrong took the missive held out to him, and slowly read it, the General studying his face the while. The letter bore no clue as to the whereabouts of the writer. It read:

"MARCH 1st, '98.

"It is six weeks since I repaid all your loving kindness, brought shame and sorrow to you and ruin to myself, by deserting from West Point when my commission was but a few short months away. In an hour of intense misery, caused by a girl who had won my very soul, and whose words and letters made me believe she would become my wife the month of my graduation, and who, as I now believe, was then engaged to the man she married in January, I threw myself away. My one thought was to find her, and God knows what beyond.

"It can never be undone. My career is ended,

and I can never look you in the face again. At first I thought I should show the letters, one by one, to the man she married, and ask him what he thought of his wife, but that is too low. I hold them because I have a mad longing to see her again and heap reproaches upon her, but, if I fail and should I feel at any time that my end is near, I'm going to send them to you to read—to see how I was lured, and then, if you can, to pity and forgive.

'ROLLIN."

Armstrong's firm lips twitched under his mustache. The General, with moist eyes, had risen from his chair and mechanically held forth his hand. "Poor lad!" sighed Armstrong. "Of course—you know who the girl was?"

"Oh, of course," and Drayton shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, we'll have to go," and led on to the misty light without.

Over across the way were the headquarters tents of a big brigade, hopefully awaiting orders for Manila. To their left, separated by a narrow space, so crowded were the camps,

were the quarters of the officers of the —teenth Infantry, and even through the veil of mist both soldiers could plainly see along the line. Coming toward the gate was Mr. Prime, escorted by the major. Just behind them followed Mildred and the attentive Schuyler. But where was Miss Lawrence? Armstrong had already seen. Lingering, she stood at Billy's tent front, her ear inclined to his protruding pate. He was saying something that took time, and she showed no inclination to hurry him. Miss Prime looked back, then she and Schuyler exchanged significant smiles and glances. There was rather a lingering handclasp before Amy started. Even then she looked back at the boy and smiled.

"H'm!" said the General, as he gazed, "that youngster wouldn't swap places with any subaltern in camp, even if he *is* under charges."

There was no answer from the strong soldier standing observant at his elbow. But when the chief would have moved Armstrong detained him. "One more question, General. In case you were away and wanted something you

had left in this tent, you would send an aide—or orderly, or—would an order signed by one of your staff be sufficient?"'

"H'm, well—yes, I suppose it would," said the General.

CHAPTER XII.

OPINION was divided at Camp Merritt as to whether Billy Gray should or should not stand trial. Confident as were his friends of his innocence of all complicity in Morton's escape, there remained the fact that he had telephoned for a carriage, that a carriage had come and that a carriage with four men, apparently soldiers, had driven rapidly townward along Point Lobos Avenue. It was seen by half a dozen policemen as it shot under electric light or gas lamp. Then there was the bundle inside his rolled overcoat that Gray had personally handed Morton when a prisoner. Everybody agreed he should have sent it by orderly—everybody, that is, except some scores of young soldiers in the ranks who could see no harm in it having been done that way, especially two "Delta Sigs" in the —teenth. Then there were the long conferences in the dark. What 'd

they mean? All things considered the older and wiser heads saw that, as the lieutenant could or would make no satisfactory explanation of these to his colonel, he must to a court —or take the consequences.

"You've made a mess of the thing and an ass of yourself, Billy," was Gordon's comprehensive if not consolatory summary of the matter, "and as Canker has been rapped for one thing or another by camp, division and brigade commanders, one *after* another, he feels that he's got to prove that he isn't the only fool in the business. You'd better employ good counsel and prepare for a fight."

"Can't afford it," said Billy briefly, "and I'm blowed if I'll ask my dear old dad to come to the rescue. He's had to cough up (shame on your slang, Billy) far too much already. I tell you, Gordon, I'm so fixed that I can't explain these things unless I'm actually brought to trial. It's—it's—well—you have no secret societies at the Point as we do at college, so you can't fathom it. I'm no more afraid of standing trial than I am of Squeers—and be d——d to him!"

"Good Lawd, youngster—you—you aren't quite such an ass as to suppose a court is going to regard any schoolboy obligation as paramount to that which your oath of office demands. Look hyuh, Billy, your head's just addled! *I* can't work on you, but somebody must!"

And Gordon went away very low in his mind. He liked that boy. He loved a keen, alert, snappy soldier on drill, and Billy had no superior in the battalion when it came to handling squad or company. The adjutant plainly saw the peril of his position, and further consultation with his brother-officers confirmed him in his fears. Schuyler, the brigade commissary, being much with the —teenth—messing with them, in fact, when he was not dancing attendance on Miss Prime—heard all this camp talk and told her. Thus it happened that the very next day when he drove with the cousins (Mr. Prime being the while in conference with the detectives still scouring the city for the young deserter, who the father now felt confident was his missing boy), Miss Lawrence

looked the captain full in the face with her clear, searching eyes and plumped at him the point-blank question:

"Captain Schuyler, do Mr. Gray's brother-officers really consider him in danger of dismissal?"

"Miss Lawrence, I grieve to say that not one has any other opinion now."

There could be no doubt of it. Amy Lawrence turned very pale and her beautiful eyes filled.

"It is a shame!" she said, after a moment's struggle to conquer the trembling of her lips. "Has—is there no one—influential enough—or with brains enough" (this with returning color) "to take up his case and clear him?"

They were whirling through the beautiful drive of the Golden Gate Park, passing company after company at drill. Even as Amy spoke Schuyler lifted his cap and Miss Prime bowed and smiled. A group of regimental officers, four in number, stood, apparently supervising the work, and as Miss Lawrence quickly turned to see who they might be, her eyes met those of Colonel Armstrong. Five

minutes later, the carriage returning drew up as though by some order from its occupants, at that very spot. Armstrong and his adjutant were still there and promptly joined them.

Long weeks afterward that morning lived in Stanley Armstrong's memory. It was one of those rare August days when the wind blew from the southeast, beat back the drenching Pacific fogs, and let the warm sun pour upon the brilliant verdure of that wonderful park. Earth and air, distant sea and dazzling sky, all seemed glorifying their Creator. Bright-hued birds flashed through the foliage and thrilled the ear with their caroling. The plash of fountain fell softly on the breeze, mingled with the rustling of the luxuriant growth of leaf and flower close at hand. It was not chance that brought the stalwart soldier instantly to Amy's side. Her gaze was upon him before the carriage stopped, and irresistibly drew him. The man of mature years, the hero of sharp combats and stirring campaigns with a fierce and savage foe, the commander of hundreds of eager and gallant men, obeyed without

thought of demur the unspoken summons of a girl yet in her teens. There was a new light in her clear and beautiful eyes, a flush upon her soft and rounded cheek, a little flutter, possibly, in her kind and loyal heart. Heaven knows his beat high with an emotion he could not subdue, though his bearing was grave and courteous as ever, but about that sweet and flushing face there shone the halo of a woman's brave determination, and no sooner had he reached the carriage side than, bending toward him, she spoke. Mildred Prime could not repress a little gasp of amaze.

"Colonel Armstrong, will you kindly open the carriage door? I want to talk with you a moment."

Without a word he wrenched the handle and threw wide the door. Light as a bird she sprang to the ground, her fingers just touching the extended hand. Side by side they strolled away across the sunlit lawn, he so strong, virile, erect, she so lissome and graceful. Full of her purpose, yet fearful that with delay might come timidity, she looked up in his face:

"Colonel Armstrong, I have heard only to-day that Mr. Gray is in really serious danger. Will you tell me—the truth?"

Just what Armstrong expected it might be hard to say. The light that had leaped to his eyes faded slowly and his face lost something of the flush of robust health. There was a brief pause before he spoke as though he wished time to weigh his words.

"I fear it is true," he gravely said. Then in a moment: "Miss Lawrence, will you not take my arm?" And he felt her hand tremble as she placed it there. It was a moment before she began again.

"They tell me he should have counsel, but will not heed. I have not seen him to-day. There is no one in his battalion, it seems, whom he really looks up to. He is headstrong and self-confident. Do you think he should—that he needs one?" And anxiously the brave eyes sought the strong, soldierly face.

"It would seem so, Miss Lawrence."

She drew a long breath. She seemed to cling a little closer to his arm. Then—straight came the next question:

"Colonel Armstrong, will you do me a great favor? Will you be his counsel?"

He was looking directly to the front as she spoke. Something told him what was coming, yet he could not answer all at once. What did it mean, after all, but just what he had been thinking for a week, that the girl's fresh young heart had gone out to this merry, handsome, soldierly lad, whom he, too, had often marked with keen appreciation when in command of his big company at drill. What possible thought of hers could he, "more than twice her years," have ever hoped to win. She had come to him in her sore trouble—and her lover's—as she would have gone to her father had he been a soldier schooled in such affairs. Armstrong pulled himself together with quick, stern self-command.

Looking down, he saw that her eyes were filling, her lips paling, and a rush of tenderness overcame him as he simply and gently answered:

"Yes, and there is no time to be lost."

. . . . . .

All these last days, it will be remembered, Mrs. Frank Garrison with pretty "Cherry Ripe" had found shelter at the Presidio. The Palace was no place for a poor soldier's wife, and there was no longer a grateful nabob as a possible source of income. It is doubtful indeed whether that mine could be further tapped, for the effusive brother-in-law of the winter gone by had found disillusion in more ways than one. Garrison, busy day and night with his staff duties, had plainly to tell his capricious wife that she had come without his knowledge or consent, and that he could not think of meeting the expense of even a two weeks' stay in town. He could not account for her coming at all. He had left her with his own people where at least she would be in comfort while he took the field. He desired that she should return thither at once. She determined to remain and gayly tapped his cheek and bade him have no concern. She could readily find quarters, and so she did. The regular garrison of the Presidio was long since afield, but the families of many of its officers still remained there, while the

houses of two or three, completely furnished so far as army furnishings go, were there in charge of the post quartermaster. From being the temporary guests of some old friends, Mrs. Frank and her pretty companion suddenly opened housekeeping in one of these vacated homes, and all her witchery was called into play to make it the most popular resort of the younger element at the post. Money she might lack, but no woman could eclipse her in the dazzle of her dainty toilets. The Presidio was practically at her feet before she had been established forty-eight hours. Other peoples' vehicles trundled her over to camp whenever she would drive. Other peoples' horses stood saddled at her door when she would ride. Other peoples' servants flew to do her bidding. Women might whisper and frown, but for the present, at least, she had the men at her beck and call. Morn, noon and night she was on the go, the mornings being given over, as a rule, to a gallop over the breezy heights where the brigade or regimental drills were going on, the afternoons to calls, wherein it is ever more blessed to give than to

receive—and the evenings to hops at the assembly room, or to entertaining—charmingly entertaining the little swarm of officers with occasional angels of her own sex, sure to drop in and spend an hour. Cherry played and sang and "made eyes" at the boys. Mrs. Frank was winsome and genial and joyous to everybody, and when Garrison himself arrived from camp, generally late in the evening, looking worn and jaded from long hours at the desk, she had ever a comforting supper and smiling, playful welcome for her lord, making much of him before the assembled company, to the end that more than one callow sub was heard to say that there would be some sense in marrying, by George, if a fellow could pick up a wife like Mrs. Frank. All the same the post soon learned that the supposedly blest aide-de-camp breakfasted *solus* on what he could forage for himself before he mounted and rode over to his long day's labor at Camp Merritt. Another thing was speedily apparent, the *entente cordial* between her radiant self and the Primes was at an end, if indeed it ever existed. *She*, to be sure, was

sunshine itself when they chanced to meet at camp. The clouds were on the faces of the father and daughter, while Miss Lawrence maintained a serene neutrality.

They were lingering in 'Frisco, still hopefully, were the Primes. The detectives on duty at the landing stage the evening Stewart's regiment embarked swore that no one answering the description of either of the two young men had slipped aboard. Those in the employ of the sad old man were persistent in the statement that they had clues—were on the scent, etc. He was a sheep worth the shearing, and so, while Mr. Prime spent many hours in consultation with certain of these so-called sleuth-hounds, the young ladies took their daily drive through the park, generally picking up the smiling Schuyler somewhere along the way, and rarely omitting a call, with creature comforts in the way of baskets of fruit, upon the happy Billy, whose limits were no longer restricted to his tent, as during the first week of his arrest, but whose court was ordered to sit in judgment on him the first of the coming

week. Already it began to be whispered that Armstrong had a mine to spring in behalf of the defense, but he was so reserved that no one, even Gordon, sought to question.

"Armstrong is a trump!" said Billy to Miss Lawrence, one fair morning. "He'll knock those charges silly—though I dare say I could have wormed through all right; only, you see, I couldn't get out to find people to give evidence for me."

"Do you—see him often?" she asked, somewhat vaguely.

"Armstrong!" exclaimed Billy, in open-eyed amaze. "Why, he's here with me every day."

"But never," thought Miss Lawrence, "in the morning—when we are."

The eventful Monday was duly ushered in, but not the court. That case never came to trial. Like the crack of a whip an order snapped in by wire on the Thursday previous —three regiments, the —teenth regulars and the "Primeval Dudes," Armstrong's splendid regiment among them—to prepare for sea voyage forthwith. More than that, General Dray-

ton and staff were directed to proceed to Manila at once. Two-thirds of the members of the court were from these regiments. A new detail would be necessary. The General sent for Armstrong.

"Can't we try that case here and now?" he asked.

"Certainly," said Armstrong, "if you'll send for Canker that *he* may be satisfied."

And Canker came and listened. It was admitted that Gray had had a long talk with the prisoner, took him his overcoat, newspapers, etc., but, in extenuation, they were members of the same college society and their social standing was, outside the army, on the same plane. Gray deserved reprimand and caution—nothing more. As to the carriage, he had nothing to do with the one that drove to camp that night. A man in the uniform of a commissary sergeant giving the name of Foley (how Canker winced) had ordered it at the stable and taught the driver "Killarney." Gray had 'phoned for a carriage for himself, hoping to get the officer-of-the-day's permission to be absent two hours

to tell his story in person to the General, who was dining with the department commander. He never got the permission, and the carriage went to the wrong camp. Lieutenant W. F. Gray was released from arrest and returned to duty.

"I shall never be able to thank you enough," said he, sentimentally, to Miss Lawrence, at the Palace that evening. They were strolling up and down the corridor, waiting, as was Schuyler, for Mildred to come down for the theater. Gray's curly head was inclined toward the dark locks of his fair partner. His eyes were fastened on her faintly flushing face. They made a very pretty picture, said people who looked on knowingly, and so thought the officer in the uniform of a colonel of infantry, who, while talking calmly to Mr. Prime full thirty yards away, watched them with eyes that were full of sadness. How could *he* see at that distance that her eyes, clear and radiant, were seldom uplifted to the ardent gaze of her escort, and were at the moment looking straight at him? How could he hear at that distance the prompt

response, given with an inclination of the bonny head to indicate her meaning?

"There's where your thanks are due, Mr. Gray."

Quite a gathering of army folk was at the Palace that night. So many wives or sweethearts were going home, so many soldiers abroad, and Mrs. Frank Garrison, gay and gracious, passed them time and again, leaning on the arm of Captain McDonald, a new devotee, while poor Cherry, with an enamored swain from the Presidio, languished in a dim, secluded corner. She had been recalled by parental authority and was to start for Denver under a matronly wing on the morrow. Mrs. Frank had been bidden, and expected, to go at the same time, but that authority was merely marital. Up to this time not one army wife had been permitted to accompany her husband on any of the transports to Manila, though one heroine managed to get carried away and to share her liege lord's stateroom as far as Honolulu. The General and his staff, with a big regiment of volunteers, were to sail on the mor-

row, the other regiments as fast as transports could be coaled and made ready.

Something in Mrs. Garrison's gay, triumphant manner prompted a sore-hearted woman, suffering herself at the coming parting, to turn and say: "Well, Mrs. Garrison, I suppose that after your husband sails you'll have to follow the rest of us into grass-widowhood."

One thing that made women hate Margaret Garrison was that she "could never be taken down," and the answer came cuttingly, as it was meant to go, even though a merry laugh went with it.

"Not I! When the ship I want is ready, I go with it!"

But as she turned triumphantly away, the color suddenly left her cheek and there was an instant's falter. As though he had heard her words, Stanley Armstrong too had suddenly turned and stood looking sternly into her eyes.

CHAPTER XIII.

STILL another expedition was destined to start for Manila, and keen was the rivalry among the regiments held to daily drill at San Francisco. The rumor was current in the camps that the next review was to decide the matter, and that the commands pronounced to be foremost in discipline and efficiency would be designated to embark. The transports that had conveyed the earlier expeditions to the Philippines began to reappear in the bay, and coaling and refitting were hurried to the utmost. The man most eager to get away was Stanley Armstrong; and if merit were to decide the matter it was conceded among the volunteers that in point of style and equipment the "Primeval Dudes" "held over" all competitors, even though every competitor believed itself more than a match for the Dudes if actual campaigning and fighting were in contempla-

tion. Senators and members from the States represented by the volunteers at San Francisco led burdensome lives, for officers and men were pulling every wire to secure the longed-for orders for an immediate voyage to Manila, when, all on a sudden, the hopes of all were crushed. Spain had begged for peace. "No more men can be sent to Manila," said the officials consulted, and Camp Merritt put on mourning forthwith.

But Armstrong had been studying the situation and was not easily daunted. He was a man whose opinion carried weight, and from the very first he had maintained that while fifteen or twenty thousand might be men enough to hold Manila, fifty thousand might not be enough to subdue at once the forces of Aguinaldo in case they should turn upon the Americans, which said he, placidly, they will most certainly do before we are a year older.

The Dudes, therefore, much to their disgust, were kept steadily at work. Other regiments, profiting by example, followed suit; but in others still, a small proportion of their mem-

bership, believing as they said, that the "jig was up," took to lawless and unhallowed expression of their disgust and became thereby a nuisance to the neighborhood. San Franciscans, who had wept copiously when others sailed away, would have seen these patriots sent into exile without shedding a tear.

"Every man of this command will yet be needed and yet be sent," said Armstrong. So, too, did the veteran division commander, and the brigade took heart accordingly. The last of the regulars, with the recruit detachments for regiments already in the Philippines, had been shipped to Honolulu, there to await orders, and September seemed destined to go by without a change for the better in the prospects of the men still left in camp about the reservation. The Primes, convinced at last that the boy they sought was not to be found in California, had gone to Santa Anita visiting their kindred, the Lawrences; and Armstrong, buckling down to hard and constant work, was striving to persuade himself that he did not care that the mornings no longer brought with them the car-

riage and the fair face of that gentle girl; the department commander himself had gone to take a look at his new responsibilities in Hawaii; little Mrs. Garrison still held court, though with diminished retinue, at the Presidio, when one day, just as October was ushered in, there came a message from the adjutant-general in town. Would Armstrong drop in at the office at the first opportunity? A matter of some importance had come up in the general's first letter from Honolulu, one on which Armstrong's opinion was desired; and the colonel, hoping for tidings of a chance to move even that far to the front, made immediate opportunity and took the first car for the Phelan Building. The adjutant-general looked up from a littered desk as Armstrong entered.

"It is good of you to come so promptly," said he. "I'm in a stew, to tell the truth, and I want your advice." Then he tapped his bell. "Excuse me to any one who comes for the next ten minutes," said he, to the attendant who entered. "I have business with Colonel Armstrong."

No sooner did the orderly vanish than the man of the desk whirled full on the man of the saddle. "Armstrong," said he, "you defended Gray and proved him innocent. What else has Canker against him?"

"Nothing that I know of—why?"

"Because he's got him in arrest again at Honolulu, and the chief is worked up over something. Look here—do you suppose—did you ever hear about certain letters that were stolen from General Drayton's tent?"

"I heard—yes. Why?" And the look of disappointment which had appeared in the grave face of the colonel gave way to one of alert interest.

"Just read that," said the staff official, holding forth a letter. "Begin there at 'Later!' "

And Armstrong read, his forehead slowly grooving into something very like a frown.

"Later. I may have to remain here several days. Canker, with the —teenth, went ahead before news of the protocol could stop him; but he leaves here a number of sick—Lieutenant Gray, charged with using threatening and in-

subordinate language to his commanding officer, among them; and Gray is down with brain fever. The doctors say he is too ill to be disturbed, and his side of the story is hard to get at, as the boy is too flighty to talk sense. From Canker's own admission I learned that he accused Gray of having knowledge of the whereabouts of that packet of letters stolen from General Drayton's tent, and the youngster's reply was furious. Canker *had* to place him in arrest and prefer charges. When asked if he were sure of his ground in making so serious an accusation, he declared he had proof positive, at least he would have the instant they reached Manila, and his intention was to take the boy along with him to be tried there by court-martial, where "no meddling outsiders," as he said, could buy off witnesses. It was plain that he considered himself out of my jurisdiction, and that he resented my staff officer's questions. But Dr. Morrow had appealed to me in behalf of Gray. Said that if compelled to continue a prisoner aboard that transport under Canker's tyrannical rule Gray might be

goaded into insanity. He was in a condition bordering on brain fever when Morrow came to see me, and in another day was raving. That settled it. I ordered him taken off and placed in hospital here, and Canker had to go without him. But I wish you would see Armstrong and tell him about Gray, so that I may know the whole situation as soon as I return. Canker evidently intended not to let us know his proofs. He probably believes that he will find a more credulous and complaisant listener in Drayton; but his insinuations pointed to Gray as at least an abettor in the theft, and he went so far as to say that if Armstrong could be brought before the court some very interesting testimony could be dragged from him, and, finally, that both Armstrong and Mrs.— well, the wife of a staff officer who is already well on the way to Manila—might be compelled to testify. I cannot bring myself to repeat more that he said; but he was in ugly and almost defiant mood, and I had to give him a dressing down. You may say to Armstrong for me that I do not believe one word of Canker's calumny at his ex-

pense or that of the lady in the case. But he declared his intention of laying the whole matter before General Drayton immediately on his arrival, and it is best that Armstrong should be prepared. As for the lady, Canker said she and Armstrong were very close friends when they were at Fort Stanhope ten years ago, though they no longer meet as such.

And that brings me to another matter. I declined positively to allow two or three ladies, wives of officers, to go on to Manila with Canker's command; and they said that as I had promised Mrs. Garrison a passage I had no right to refuse them. Pressed for their authority, two very estimable women told me that, at the Presidio two days before we sailed, Mrs. Garrison openly boasted of having my promise to send her on the very next steamer. Now, who is really the fabricator? I told her positively that, with my consent, she should not go; and she laughed delightedly, and said she only asked as a matter of form—the whole thing had already been settled. Just see to it that if any more transports start before my re-

turn no woman is permitted aboard except, of course, authorized nurses. Gray is a very sick boy to-night, but you might wire his father, saying nothing of the arrest, that the doctors are confident of his recovery in course of time."

Armstrong read these pages twice over before he looked up.

"How did this letter come?" he asked.

"By the Salvador yesterday."

"And the next mail for Honolulu?" queried Armstrong, rising from his chair and handing back the folded letter.

"The next mail closed an hour ago, man. The China sails at two. No other boat for a week. Where are you going now?"

"To camp for ten minutes, then to the Presidio."

"Oh, come over to the club and have a bite first?" said the adjutant-general, rising and wriggling out of his uniform coat as he did so. "I won't keep you half an hour."

"That half-hour may prove precious," answered Armstrong, already at the door. "Many thanks all the same."

"Well. Hold on. What am I to say to the General as to Gray and those letters?" asked the staff officer, intent upon the subject uppermost in his mind at the moment.

"You can't say anything that will reach him before he returns. You have just told me no other boat would start for a week. By that time he'll be coming home." And with that Armstrong let himself out and strode to the elevator, leaving his friend to cogitate on the question over his luncheon. It was decidedly that officer's opinion that Armstrong knew much more than he would tell.

But Armstrong knew much less than he himself believed. Hastening back to camp and ordering his horse, he was soon speeding up the slope to the wind-swept heights overlooking the Golden Gate. The morning had opened fine as silk, but by noon the sky was hidden in clouds and the breath of the sea blew in salt and strong. The whitecaps were leaping on the crest of the surges driving in through the straits and the surf bursting high on the jagged rocks at the base of the cliffs. A little coast

steamer from Santa Barbara way came pitching and plunging in from sea, and one or two venturesome craft, heeling far to leeward, tore through the billows and tossed far astern a frothing wake. With manes and tails streaming in the stiff gale, the troop horses of the Fourth Cavalry were cropping at the scanty herbage down the northward slope, and the herd guard nearest the road lost his grip on his drab campaign hat as he essayed a salute, and galloped off on a stern chase down the long ravine to the east, as the colonel trotted briskly by. One keen glance over the bay beyond rocky Alcatraz had told him the China was not yet away from her pier. He might have to send a dispatch by that swift steamer, and even then it would be six days getting to Hawaii. If the department commander should by that time be on his homeward journey the information would still be of interest to the general commanding the new military district at "the Cross Roads of the Pacific," and of vast benefit, possibly, to his late client, Mr. Gray. He wondered what Canker's grounds could be for

saddling so foul a suspicion on the boy's good name. He wondered how long that poor lad would have to struggle with this attack of fever and remain, perhaps happily, unconscious of this latest indignity. He wondered if Amy Lawrence yet knew of that serious seizure, and, if she did, what would be her sensations. Down the winding, sloping road he urged his way, Glencoe, his pet charger, marveling at the unusual gait. The cape of the sentry's overcoat whirled over the sentry's head and swished his cap off as he presented arms to the tall soldier spurring past the guardhouse. "I envy no one who has to put to sea this day," said Armstrong to himself, as he turned to the right and reined up in front of a little brown cottage peeping out from a mass of vines and roses, shivering in the wet wind. Half a dozen strides took him across the narrow walk and up the wooden steps. With sharp emphasis he clanged the little gong bell screwed to the back of the door and waited impatient for the servant's coming. There was no answer. He rang again and still again, and no one came.

A glance at the windows told that the white lace curtains hung there draped as prettily as ever. Fresh flowers stood on the window sill. A shawl and a pillow, the latter indented as by a human head, lay in the lounging chair on the little porch. Another chair stood but a few feet away. There was even a fan, though fans in a 'Frisco summer are less needed than furs; but nowhere saw he other sign of the temporary mistress of the house. He went round to a side window and rapped. No answer. Then he turned to the walk again, and, taking the reins, bade the orderly inquire next door if Mrs. Garrison could be found. Yes, was the answer; she went driving to Golden Gate Park with Mrs. Stockman an hour ago, and Mrs. Stockman was to leave for Los Angeles that night. Odd! If Mrs. Garrison drove to Golden Gate Park the easiest and best way was that along which he came, and he had met no carriage. In fact, not since that night at the Palace had he set eyes on Mrs. Garrison, or until the coming of this sorrowful news about Gray had he cared to. From all that he heard Mrs. Frank was

enjoying herself at the Presidio. Cherry having gone one way and her devotee another, Mrs. Frank speedily summoned a chum of old garrison days to come and keep house with her for a while, and Mrs. Stockman, whose lord had left her at the call to duty, and gone to Manila with his men, right gladly accepted and much enjoyed the fun and frolic that went on night after night in Mrs. Frank's cozy parlor, or the mild flirtation, possibly, in the recesses of Mrs. Frank's embowered porch. The last expedition had borne off almost all the "regular" element at the post, but had not left it poor, for, fast as camp grounds could be made ready for them, vastly to the disgust of the saloon keepers and street-car magnates who had reaped rich harvest from Camp Merritt, regiment after regiment, the volunteers came marching over from the malodorous sand lots and settled down in sheltered nooks about the Presidio. So cavaliers in plenty were still to be had, cavaliers whose wives and sweethearts, as a rule, were far away; and Mrs. Frank loved to console such as were so bereft. The chafing

dish and Scotch and soda were in nightly request; and even women who didn't at all fancy Mrs. Frank, and spoke despitefully of her among themselves, were not slow to come in "for just a minute," as they said, as the evenings wore on, and to stay and chat with various visitors—it was so lonesome and poky over home with the children asleep and nothing to do. Women there were who never darkened Mrs. Garrison's door after the first formal calls; but they were of those who deeply felt the separation from all they held most dear, and who, forbidden themselves, heard with envy and even distress her gay assertion that she would sail for Manila the moment the Queen of the Fleet was ready. From what source—or circumstance—did she derive her influence?

But with the edict that no more troops should be sent came comfort to the souls of these bereaved ones. Transports would not go without troops, and Mrs. Frank could not go without transports, the journey was far too expensive. They wished her no evil, of course; but, if they were themselves forbidden how could they re-

joice that she should be permitted? They were actually beginning to feel a bit charitable toward her when the Queen of the Fleet herself came in from Honolulu with the latest news. The fifth expedition had been halted there and put in camp. The hospital held several officers. Billy Gray was down with brain fever, and there had been a furious scene between him and his peppery colonel before the break down; and by that same steamer Mrs. Garrison had got a letter that made her turn white and tremble, as Mrs. Stockman saw and told, and then shut herself up in her room an entire day. Now, for nearly a fortnight, the lovely guest had been daily hinting that she really must go home, "dear Witchie" was surely tired of her; and Witchie disclaimed and protested and vowed she could not live without her devoted friend. But then had come that letter and with it a change of tone and tactics. Witchie ceased to remonstrate or reprove Mrs. Stockman, and the latter felt that she must go, and Witchie consented without demur.

In no pleasant mood Armstrong mounted

and trotted for the east gate. The road was lined with camps and volunteers at drill. Vehicles were frequently moving to and fro; but the sentry at the entrance had kept track of them, and in response to question answered promptly and positively Mrs. Garrison's carriage had not come that way. "But," said he, "the wagon with the lady's baggage did. I saw the name on the trunks."

The colonel turned in saddle and coolly surveyed him. "Do you mean Mrs. Stockman's name?" he asked in quiet tone. "How many trunks were there?"

"Oh, some of them might have had Mrs. Stockman's name, sir; but the two or three that I saw were marked M. G."

This was unlooked-for news. To her next-door neighbor Mrs. Garrison had said nothing about going away with Mrs. Stockman, and Armstrong had grave need to see her and to see her at once. The train for Los Angeles did not leave until evening. Possibly they were lunching somewhere—spending the afternoon with friends in town. He rode direct to headquar-

ters. Some of the staff might be able to tell, was his theory; and one of them justified it.

"Did I happen to meet Mrs. Garrison? Yes, I just saw her aboard the China."

"Aboard the China!" exclaimed Armstrong, with sudden thrill of excitement. "D'you mean she is going?"

"Didn't ask her. They were hustling everybody ashore, and I had only time to give dispatches to Purser; but she was on the deck with friends when I came away."

People wondered that day at the speed with which the tall officer, followed by his orderly, clattered away down Market Street. In less than ten minutes Armstrong was at the crowded pier and pushing through the throng to the China's stage. Too late! Already it was swung aloft, the lines were cast loose, and the huge black mass was just beginning to back slowly from its moorings. The rail of the promenade deck swarmed with faces, some radiant, some tearful. Words of adieu, fluttering kerchiefs, waving hands, tossing flowers were there on every side. Two officers, Hono-

lulu bound, shouted Armstrong's name, and a cheery good-by; but he did not seem to hear. A gentle voice, the voice of all others he most longed to hear, repeated the name and strove to call attention to his gesticulating comrades on the upper deck; but he was deaf to both. Eagerly, anxiously, incredulously he was searching along that crowded rail, and all on a sudden he saw her. Yes, there she stood, all gayety, grace and animation, stylishly gowned and fairly burdened with roses; and it was right at him she was gazing, nodding, smiling, all sweetness, all confiding, trusting joy; with just a little of triumph, too, and a tinge of sentimental sorrow in the parting. Apparently, it was all for him; for her blue eyes never faltered till they fixed his gaze, and then, kiss after kiss she threw to him with the daintily gloved little hand, and, leaning far down over the rail, lowering it toward him as much as possible, she finally tossed to him, standing there stern and spellbound, a bunch of beautiful roses she had torn from her corsage. It fell almost at his feet, for in his astonishment and

rising wrath he made no effort to catch it. A man, stooping quickly, rescued and handed it to him. Mechanically he said "Thank you," and took it, a thorn pricking deep into the flesh as he did so; and still his eyes were fixed on that fairy form now surely, swiftly gliding away, and over him swept the consciousness of utter defeat, of exasperation, of dismay, even as he strove to fathom her motives in thus singling him out for such conspicuous—even affectionate—demonstration. Triumph and delight he could have understood, but not, not this semblance of confidential relations, not at least until he felt his arm grasped by a cordial hand, heard his name spoken by a friendly voice, and Mr. Prime's pleasant inquiry: "Have you no greeting for other friends?" Then the hot blood rushed to his face and showed even through the bronze as, turning, his troubled eyes met full the clear, placid gaze of Amy Lawrence.

CHAPTER XIV.

Mid October. The Queen of the Fleet, the finest transport of the Pacific service, thronged with boys in blue at last ordered on to Manila, lay at the wharf at Honolulu, awaiting her commander's orders to cast loose. In strong force, and with stentorian voices, the Primeval Dudes joined in rollicking chorus to the crashing accompaniment of their band and, when they could take time to rest, the crowd ashore set up a cheer. The Hawaiian National Band, in spotless white, forming huge and melodious circle on the wharf, vied with the musicians from the States in the spirit and swing of their stirring airs. "*Aloha Oe! Aloha Oe!*" chorused the surging throng, afloat and ashore, as wreaths and garlands—the *leis* of the islanders —were twined or hung about some favorite officer or favored man. The troops still held to service in Hawaii shouted good will and good-

by to those ordered on to the Philippines. The Dudes of the Queen, and the lads from the prairies and the mountains on other transports anchored in the deep but narrow harbor, yelled soldierly condolence to those condemned to stay. The steam of the 'scape pipe roared loudly and belched dense white clouds on high, swelling the uproar. Dusky little Kanaka boys, diving for nickels and paddling tireless about the ship, added their shrill cries to the clamor. The captain, in his natty uniform of blue and gold, stepped forth upon the bridge to take command, and raised his banded cap in recognition of the constant cheer from the host ashore and the throng of blue shirts on the forecastle head. Then arose another shout, as a veteran officer, in the undress uniform of a general, appeared upon that sacred bound, and, bowing to the crowd, was escorted by the captain to the end overlooking the animated scene below; and then the signal was given, the heavy lines were cast off and hauled swiftly in, the massive screw began slowly to churn the waters at the stern, and gently, almost imperceptibly at first,

the Queen slid noiselessly along the edge of the dock, to the accompaniment of a little volley of flowers and garlands tossed from eager hands, and a cheer of godspeed from the swarm of upturned faces. And then there uprose another shout, a shout of mingled merriment, surprise and applause; for all on a sudden there darted up the stairway from the crowded promenade deck to the sacred perch above, defiant of the lettered warning, "Passengers are not allowed upon the Bridge," a dainty vision in filmy white, and all in the next moment there appeared at the General's side, smiling, bowing, blowing kisses, waving adieux, all sparkle, animation, radiance and rejoicing, a bewitching little figure in the airiest, loveliest of summer toilets. The Red Cross nurses on the deck below looked at one another and gasped. Two brave army girls, wives of wounded officers in the Philippines, who, by special dispensation, were making the voyage on the Queen, glanced quickly at each other and said—nothing audible. The General, lifting his cap, but looking both deprecation and embarrassment, fell back

and gave his place at the white rail to the new arrival, and colored high when she suddenly turned and took his arm. The captain, trying not to see her or to appear conscious of this infraction of a stringent rule and invasion of his dignity, grew redder as he shouted rapid orders and swung his big, beautiful ship well out into the stream. The guns of the Bennington boomed a deafening salute as the Queen turned her sharp nose toward the open sea; and almost the last thing Honolulu saw of her human freight was the tiny, dainty, winsome little figure in white, waving a spotless kerchief as in fond farewell. Once clear of the narrow entrance the big troop ship headed westward toward the setting sun, shook free the reins, as it were, and, followed by less favored craft, sped swiftly on her way, Witchie Garrison, the latest addition to the passenger list, entirely at home, if not actually in command.

Leaning on the General's arm an hour later and deftly piloting that bewildered veteran up and down the breezy deck, she came, just as she had planned to come, face to face once more

with Stanley Armstrong. Well she knew that under the escort of that exalted rank she was safe from any possibility of cross question or interference. Well she knew that had he heard of her sudden determination to go to Honolulu she could not have escaped stern interrogation, possibly something worse; and her heart failed her when she realized that the man who had gauged her shallow nature years before, now held a lash over her head in the shape of the paper that mad vanity had prompted her to write and send to the officer of the guard the day that Stewart sailed. What madness it was, indeed, yet how could she have dreamed it would fall into the hands of the man of all others she feared and respected—the one man who, had he but cared, could years ago have had her love, the man who, because he cared not, had won her hate! And, now that he held or had held this paper—nothing less than a forged order in her husband's name as aide-de-camp to General Drayton, she could have cowered at his feet in her terror of him, yet braved him with smiles, sweetness and gayety, with arch

merriment and joyous words, quitting for the moment the General's arm that she might extend to him both her little white-gloved hands. Gravely he took the left in his left while with the right he raised his forage cap in combined salute to the woman and to his superior officer. Gravely and almost instantly he released it, and listened in helpless patience to her torrent of playful words; but his eyes were on the General's face as though he would ask could he, the General, know the true character of the woman he had honored above all her sisterhood on board, in thus taking her to the bridge whereon neither officer nor man nor nurse nor army wife had presumed to set foot on all the six days' run from San Francisco, as though he would ask if the General knew just what she was, this blithe, dainty, winsome little thing that nestled so confidingly—indeed, so snugly—close to his battered side, and who had virtually taken possession of him in the face of an envious and not too silent circle of her own sex. Truth to tell, the Chief would rather have escaped. He was but an indifferent sailor, and the Queen's long,

lazy roll over the ocean surges was exciting in his inner consciousness a longing for cracked ice and champagne. He had known her but the few days the Queen remained in port, coaling and preparing for the onward voyage across the broad Pacific: but a great functionary of the general government had told him a pathetic tale the very day of his first peep at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, had given him a capital dinner at that famous hostelry, whereat she appeared in charming attire, and in a flow of spirits simply irresistible. Her sallies of wit had made him roar with delight; her mimicry of one or two conscientious but acidulated dames who had come over on the Queen, bound as nurses for Manila, had tickled him to the verge of apoplexy; but when later she backed him into the coolest corner of the "lanai" with the plash of fountain close at hand, and the sweet music of Berger's famous band floating softly on the evening air, and told him how her father had loved to talk of his, the General's, dash and daring in the great days of the great war, and led him on to tell of his campaigns in

the Shenandoah and the West, listening with dilated eyes and parted lips, the campaigner himself was captivated, and she had her will. A great senator had told him how she had come thither to nurse a gallant young officer in her husband's regiment, how she had pulled the boy through the perils of brain fever until he was now convalescent and going on to rejoin his comrades in Manila, and she, she was pining to reach her husband now serving on General Drayton's staff. Other women were aboard the Queen; could not General Crabb find room for her? It is hard for a soldier to refuse a pretty woman—or a prominent member of the committee on military affairs. There was not a vacant stateroom on the ship. Officers were sleeping three or four in a room, so were the Red Cross nurses; and the two army wives already aboard had been assigned a little cubby-hole of a cabin in which only one could dress at a time. There were only two apartments on the big craft that were not filled to their capacity—the room occupied by that sea monarch, the captain, and that which, from

having been the "Ladies' Boudoir," had been fitted up for the accommodation of the General. The piano had been wheeled out on deck, the writing table stowed away, and a fine new wide brass bedstead, with dainty white curtains and mosquito bar, a large bureau and a washstand had been moved in, and these, with easy-chairs, electric fans, electric lights and abundant air, made it the most desirable room on the ship. Even Armstrong, colonel commanding the troops aboard, was compelled to share his little cabin with his adjutant, and the General's aides were bundled into a "skimpy" box between decks. There really seemed no place for Mrs. Garrison aboard, especially when it was found that the passenger list was to be increased by three, a surgeon and two officers going forward from Honolulu; and one of these was our old friend and once light-hearted Billy Gray, now nearly convalescent, but weak and, as all could see, feverishly eager to get on to Manila.

All this was explained to the senator. It was even suggested that there was room for

Mrs. Garrison on the Louisiana, a safe old tub, if she was slow; but Mrs. Frank looked so pathetic and resigned when this arrangement was suggested that no one had the hardihood to actually dwell upon it, and the senator said it was a shame to think of it? With whom of her own sex could she associate on that long, hot voyage ahead of them? Why not transfer some of the Red Cross nurses to the Louisiana? Mrs. Garrison had no objections, but they had; and the surgeon in charge made prompt and vigorous protest. He knew Mrs. Frank, and she knew him and did not in the least despair. She still had a plan. There was a cozy dinner one evening—just the evening before the departure of the Queen, and the gallant captain of the ship, the veteran General, the quartermaster in charge of transportation, the member of the senate military committee, some charming girls,—but none so charming as Mrs. Garrison,—were of the party. There was some sentiment and much champagne, as a result of which, at one A.M., the big-hearted sea monarch aforementioned swore by the bones of his

ancestors in the slimy grasp of Davy Jones that that sweet little woman shouldn't have to go a-begging for accommodations on his ship. If the General would condescend to move into his room, by thunder, he'd sleep up in his foul-weather den next the chart room, and Mrs. Garrison—God bless her!—could take the General's room, and be queen of the ship—queen of the Queen—queen of queens—by Jupiter! and here's her health with all honor! A soldier, of course, could be no less gallant than a sailor, especially as the captain's room was a bit better than the "Boudoir," and had an ice chest and contents that the veteran campaigner was bidden to consider his own. The agreement was clinched that very night before the party broke up; and little Mrs. Frank shed tears of gratitude upon the General's coat sleeve and threw kiss after kiss to the handsome sailor as she hung over the balusters of the broad veranda and waved them away in their swift-running cabs, and then danced off to her room and threw herself on the bed after a mad pirouette about the spacious apartment, and

laughed and laughed until real tears trickled from her eyes, and then gave orders to be called at seven o'clock. She meant to be up and aboard that ship with all her luggage before sense and repentance could come with the morning sun—before either soldier or sailor could change his mind.

To the amaze of the women already aboard, to the grave annoyance of Colonel Armstrong, to the joy of poor Billy Gray, and the mischievous merriment of several youngsters on the commissioned list, Mrs. Frank Garrison, the latest arrival, became sole occupant of the finest room on the ship; and it was a bower of lilies and tropical fruit and flowers the breezy day she sailed away from the bay of Honolulu.

No time need be wasted in telling the effect of this "assignment to quarters." Prolific a source of squabble as is the custom ashore it becomes intensified afloat, and, when coupled with it, came a shaking up and rearrangement of seats at table, all hope of harmony vanished on the instant. The two brave young army girls still retained their seats at the cap-

tain's table; but two most estimable young women, Red Cross nurses, were dropped therefrom and transferred to that of the second officer on the port side, much to the comfort of a rather large percentage of their sisterhood who had regarded their previous elevation with feelings of not unmixed gratification. Then officers who had been seated with the General's staff had to vacate in favor of Mrs. Frank and Dr. Prober and Lieutenant Billy Gray, whose father and the chief were long-time chums, and the Red Cross nurses who had been at the first officer's table fell back to that of the third. It was every bit as good as the other, but it didn't sound so, and they couldn't see it; and there were faces sour as the product of the ship's baker when that evening all hands went down to dinner, and the silence maintained, or the ominously subdued tone of the talk, at the other tables, was in marked contrast with the hilarity that prevailed where sat the gray-haired, ruddy-cheeked old chief and the laughing coterie that listened to the fun that fell from the lips of Witchie Garrison. Armstrong, silent and

somber, at the captain's right, looking forward from time to time, saw only one face at the General's table that was not lighted up with merriment; it was the face of the boy he envied, if envy of this kind ever entered into his heart, and he wondered as he looked at Billy's curly head what could have come over that glad young life to leave so deep a shadow on his handsome face.

One night, just one week later, Armstrong's eyes were opened. More than once in the meanwhile he had invited the young officer's confidence, and Billy, who three months earlier had been all gratitude and frankness, protested there was nothing on his mind. He had been very ill, that was all. As to Canker's charges they were simply rot. He hadn't the faintest inkling what had become of the purloined letters any more than he had of the whereabouts of his Delta Sig friend, young Morton, now officially proclaimed a deserter. But Armstrong heard more tales of Witchie's devotions to him in his illness, and the slow convalescence that ensued, noted how the boy's eyes followed

her about the deck, and how many a time he would seek her side, even when other men were reading, walking or chatting with her. Armstrong looked with wonderment that was close allied to incredulity and pain. Was it possible that this blithe lad, who had won such a warm interest in the heart of such a girl as Amy Lawrence, could be forgetful of her, faithless to her, and fascinated now by this selfish and shallow butterfly? It was incredible!

But was it? The days had grown hotter, the nights closer, and the air between decks was stifling when the sea rolled high and closed the ports. Officers had taken to snoozing up on deck in steamer chairs. By an unwritten law the port side of the promenade deck was given up to them after eleven at night; but the women folk had the run of the starboard side at any hour when the crew were not washing down decks. Armstrong had been far forward about two o'clock one breathless night to see for himself the condition of things in the hospital under the forecastle. The main deck was crowded with sleeping forms of soldiers who found it

impossible to stand the heat below; so on his return, instead of continuing along the gangway, he decided to climb the iron ladder from the main to the promenade deck. It would land him at the forward end on the starboard side. There he could smoke a cigar in peace and quiet. It was high time everybody was asleep.

But as his head and eyes reached the level of the deck he became suddenly aware of a couple huddled close together in the shelter of a canvas screen, and under the steps leading aloft to the bridge. He knew Gray's voice at once, and Gray was pleading. He knew *her* tones of old, and she was imperative, and listening with obvious impatience, for, almost at the instant of his arrival, she spoke, low, yet distinctly. "Do as I say; do as I *beg* you when we reach Manila, and then come—and see how I can reward."

CHAPTER XV.

MANILA at last! Queen city of the Archipelago, and Manila again besieged! The loveliest of the winter months was come. The Luneta and the Paseo de Santa Lucia, close to the sparkling waters, were gay every evening with the music of the regimental bands and thronged with the carriages of old-time residents and their new and not too welcome visitors. Spanish dames and damsels, invisible at other hours, drove or strolled along the roadway to enjoy the cool breezes that swept in from the beautiful bay and wistful peeps at the dainty toilets of the American belles now arriving by every boat from Hongkong. All the Castilian disdain they might look and possibly feel toward the soldiery of Uncle Sam gave place to liveliest interest and curiosity when the wives and daughters of his soldiers appeared upon the

scene; and there was one carriage about which, whenever it stopped, a little swarm of officers gathered and toward which at any time all eyes were directed—that of the White Sisters. Within the old walled city and in the crowded districts of Binondo, Quiapo and San Miguel north of the Pasig, and again in Paco and Ermita to the south, strong regiments were stationed in readiness to suppress the first sign of the outbreak so confidently predicted by the Bureau of Military Intelligence. In a great semicircle of over twenty miles, girdling the city north, east and south, the outposts and sentries of the two divisions kept watchful eyes upon the Insurgent forces surrounding them. Aguinaldo and his cabinet at Malolos to the north had all but declared war upon the obstinate possessors of the city and had utterly forbidden their leaving the lines of Manila and seeking to penetrate those broader fields and roads and villages without. Still hugging to its breast the delusion that a semi-Malaysian race could be appeased by show of philanthropy, the government at Washington decreed that, despite their

throwing up earthworks against and training guns on the American positions, the enemy should be treated as though they never could or would be hostile, and the privileges denied by them to American troops were by the American troops accorded to them. Coming and going at will through our lines, they studied our force, our arms, equipment, numbers, supplies, methods; and long before the Christmas bells had clanged their greeting to that universal feast day, and the boom of cannon ushered in the new year, all doubt of the hostile sentiments of the Insurgent leaders had vanished. Already there had been ominous clashes at the front; and with every day the demeanor of the Philippine officers and men became more and more insolent and defiant. Ceaseless vigilance and self-control were enjoined upon the soldiers of the United States, nearly all stalwart volunteers from the far West, and while officers of the staff and of the half-dozen regiments quartered within the city were privileged each day to stroll or drive upon the Luneta, there were others that never knew

an hour away from the line of the outposts and their supports. Such was the case with Stewart's regiment far out toward the water-works at the east. Such was the case with the Primeval Dudes on the other side of the Pasig, lining the banks of the crooked estuary that formed the Rubicon we were forbidden to cross. Such was the case with Canker and the —teenth in the dense bamboo thicket to the south, and so it happened that at first Armstrong and Billy Gray saw nothing of each other, and but little of the White Sisters, probably a fortunate thing for all.

Ever since that memorable night on the Queen of the Fleet, Gray had studiously avoided his whilom friend and counselor, while the latter's equally studious avoidance of Mrs. Garrison had become observed throughout the ship. The dominion and power of that little lady had been of brief duration, as was to be expected in the case of a woman who had secured for her undivided use the best, the airiest and by far the largest room on the steamer—a *cabine de luxe* indeed, that for a week's voyage on an

Atlantic liner would have cost a small fortune, while here for a sea sojourn of more than double the time, under tropic skies, and while other and worthier women were sweltering three in a stuffy box below, it had cost but a smile. The captain had repented him of his magnanimity before the lights of Honolulu faded out astern. The General began to realize that he had been made a cat's-paw of and, his *amour propre* being wounded, he had essayed for a day or two majestic dignity of mien that became comical when complicated with the qualms of seasickness. There was even noticeable aversion on part of some of the officers of the Dudes who, having made the journey from "the Bay" to Honolulu with the women passengers, army wives and Red Cross nurses, naturally became the recipients of the views entertained by these ladies. Quick to see if slow to seem to see, Mrs. Frank has lost no time in begging one of the young soldier wives to share her big stateroom and broad and comfortable bed, and the lady preferred the heat and discomfort between decks to separation from her friend. Then

Mrs. Garrison tendered both the run of her cabin during the day and evening; suggested, indeed, that on hot nights they come and sleep there, one on the bed and one on the couch; and they thanked her, but—never came. She coddled the General with cool champagne cup when he was in the throes of *mal de mer*, and held him prisoner with her vivacious chatter when he was well enough to care to talk. But, after all, her most serious trouble seemed to consist in keeping Billy Gray at respectful distance. He sought her side day after day, to Armstrong's mild amaze, as has been said; and when he could not be with her was moody, even fierce and ugly tempered—he whose disposition had been the sunniest in all that gray, shivery, dripping sojourn at the San Francisco camp.

But once fairly settled in Manila, the White Sisters seemed to regain all the old ascendency. Colonel Frost had taken a big, cool, roomy house, surrounded by spacious grounds down in Malate and close to the plashing waters of the bay. Duties kept him early and late at his office in the walled city; but every evening,

after the drive and dinner, callers came thronging in, and all Witchie's witcheries were called into play to charm them into blindness and to cover Nita's fitful and nervous moods, now almost painfully apparent. Frost's face was at times a thundercloud, and army circles within the outer circle of Manila saw plainly that all was not harmony betwixt that veteran Benedict and that fragile, fluttering, baby wife. The bloom of Nita's beauty was gone. She looked wan, white, even haggard. She had refused to leave Hongkong or come to Manila until Margaret's arrival, then flew to the shelter of that sisterly wing. Frank Garrison had been occupying a room under the same roof with his General, but both General and aide-de-camp were now much afield, and Frank spent far more days and nights along the line of blockhouses than he did at home. The coming of his wife was unannounced and utterly unlooked for. "Did I consult my husband!" she exclaimed in surprise, when asked the question one day by the wife of a veteran field officer. "Merciful heaven, Mrs. Lenox,

there was no time for that except by cable, and at four dollars a word. No! If any doubt of what Frank Garrison will say or do exists in my mind I go and do the thing at once, then the doubt is settled. If he approve, well and good; if he doesn't—well, then I've had my fun anyway."

But it made little difference what Frank Garrison might think, say or do when Nita's need came in question. It was for Nita that Margaret Garrison so suddenly quitted the Presidio and hastened to Hawaii. It was for her sake, to be her counsel and protection, the elder sister had braved refusal, difficulties, criticism, even Armstrong's open suspicion and dislike, to take that long voyage to a hostile clime. That she braved, too, her husband's displeasure was not a matter of sufficient weight to merit consideration. She was there to help Nita; and until that hapless child were freed from a peril that, ever threatening, seemed sapping her very life, Margaret Garrison meant to stay.

For the letter that came by way of Honolulu

had told the elder sister of increasing jealousy and suspicion on the colonel's part, of his dreadful rage at Yokohama on learning that even there—the very hour of their arrival—when the consul came aboard with a batch of letters in his hand, he had one for Mrs. Frost. She had barely glanced at its contents before she was stricken with a fit of trembling, tore it in half, and tossed the fragments on the swift ebbing tide, then rushed to her stateroom. There she added a postscript to the long letter penned to Margaret on the voyage; and the purser, not her husband, saw it safely started on the Gaelic, leaving for San Francisco via Honolulu that very day. That letter beat the ordinary mail, for the Queen was heading seaward, even as the Gaelic came steaming in the coral-guarded harbor, and a little packet was tossed aboard the new troop ship as she sped away, one missive in it telling Witchie Garrison that the man whose life had been wrecked by her sister's enforced desertion was already in Manila awaiting her coming, and telling her, moreover, that the packet placed in General

Drayton's hands contained only her earlier letters. In his reckless wrath Latrobe had told her that those which bound her to him by the most solemn pledges, those that vowed undying love and devotion, were still in his hands, and that she should see him and them when at last she reached Manila.

Three mortal weeks had the sisters been there together, and never once in that time did Nita venture forth except when under escort of her black-browed husband or the protection of her smiling, witching, yet vigilant Margaret. Never once had their house been approached by any one who bore resemblance to the dreaded lover. All along the Calle Real, where were the quarters of many officers, little guards of regulars were stationed; for black rumors of Filipino uprising came with every few days, and some men's hearts were failing them for fear when they thought of the paucity of their numbers as compared with the thousands of fanatical natives to whom the taking of human life was of less account than the loss of a game chicken, and in whose sight assassination was

a virtue when it rid one of a foe. Already many an officer who had weakly yielded to the importunity of a devoted wife was cursing the folly that led him to let her join him. The outbreak was imminent. Any one could see the war was sure to come—even those who strove to banish alarm and reassure an anxious nation. And when the call to arms should sound, duty, honor and law would demand each soldier's instant answer on the battle line, then who was to care for the women? The very servants in each household, it was known, were in most cases regularly enrolled in the Insurgent army. The crowded districts in the city, the nipa huts surrounding the wealthy homes in the suburbs swarmed with Filipino soldiery in the garb of peace. Arms and ammunition, both, were stored in the great stone churches. Knives, bolos and pistols were hidden in every house. Through the clergy, in some instances, and foreign residents in others, the statement was set afloat that every American officer's residence was mapped and marked, that the Tagals were told off by name—so many for each house in

proportion to the number of American inmates —and day after day, awaiting the signal for their bloody work, these native devotees greeted with servile bows and studied the habits of the officers they were designated to fall upon in their sleep and slay without mercy. Even women and children were not to be spared; and many a woman, hearing this grewsome story, trembled in her terror. For a time, in dread of this new peril, Nita Frost almost forgot the other; but not so Margaret. She scoffed and scouted the rumor of Filipino outbreak. She laughed at Frost, who all too evidently believed in it, and was in hourly trepidation. He begged that the guard at his quarters might be doubled, and was totally unnerved when told it might even have to be reduced. Not so Mrs. Frank. She made friends with the stalwart sergeant commanding; always had hot coffee and sandwiches ready for the midnight relief; made it a point to learn the name of each successive non-commissioned officer in charge, and had a winsome smile and word for the sentries as she passed. It wasn't Filipino aggression

that she feared. The men wondered why she should so urgently bid them see that no strangers—Americans—were allowed within the massive gates. There were tramps, even in Manila, she said. When the sisters drove, their natty little Filipino team flashed through the lanes and streets at top speed, the springy Victoria bounding at their heels to the imminent peril of the cockaded hats of the dusky coach and footman, if not even to the seats of those trim, white-coated, big-buttoned, top-booted, impassive little Spanish-bred servitors. The carriage stopped only at certain designated points, and only then when a group of officers stood ready to greet them. Not once had they been menaced by any one nor approached by any man even faintly resembling poor Latrobe; and Witchie Garrison was beginning to take heart and look upon that threatening letter as a mad piece of "bluff" when one day the unexpected happened.

The men of the house, Frost and Garrison, were accustomed, when the latter was at home, to breakfast together quite early. Then the

colonel would drive off to the Ayuntamiento in the walled city, and Frank would mount his pony and ride away to his long day's duties. Later the sisters would have their leisurely breakfast, secure in the protection of the guard, would give their Chinaman *chef* his orders for the day, and send him off to make such purchases as were possible in the now scanty market. Then reading, writing, receiving callers of their own sex would fill up the morning. There would be a brief siesta after luncheon, an hour or so on the broad veranda overlooking the sparkling bay, then dress and the inevitable drive. Of Armstrong they had seen nothing, heard next to nothing. He was busy with his men over toward East Paco. Of Billy Gray of late they had seen rather too much. On one pretext after another he was now forever coming to the house, and Witchie was beginning to wish that Canker had had his way; but Canker had failed dismally. The witnesses he counted on proved dumb or departed, and it had pleased the General-in-Chief to send him with a regiment of infantry and a brace of guns

to garrison an important point on an adjacent island, and to tell him that in view of the impossibility of his substantiating his charges against Gray the youngster had some shadow of excuse for his violent outbreak. Rather than bring up a scandal it was best to drop the matter entirely. Gray had been sent to duty with the —teenth before he was thoroughly well, and a good-hearted battalion commander, taking pity on his obvious change for the worse, had found occasion after the first ten days at the front to send him back to quarters in Malate, instead of incessantly on duty along the threatened line toward Singalon Church; and while he seldom came in the evening when numbers of visitors were present, the boy had a way of dropping in between three and four, when he could generally count on a few moments, at least, alone with Mrs. Frank. She had nursed him well in his slow convalescence, had made deep impression on his boyish heart, lacerated as he conceived it by a disappointment at home. She had won him to her service, as she thought, until she felt sure he was ready to do almost

anything for her sake, then she had put him to the test, and he had failed her. Believing, as she did, that the boy well knew the whereabouts of the alleged deserter, Morton, and his friend, Nita's reckless lover, she had counted on him to wring from them the letters poor Latrobe declared he still possessed; but the three weeks had passed without a sign, and it was becoming evident to her that Gray had lost track of them entirely.

One brilliant afternoon, as she lay on the broad, cane-bottomed bedstead with its overhanging canopy of filmy netting, she drowsily heard the corporal posting the new sentry in the marbled corridor below, and then marching the relief to the rear gate opening to the beach. Nita was already up and moving about in her room. Margaret heard the rustle of her skirts and the light patter of her tiny feet as she sped over the hard wood floor of the main *salon*. She heard her throwing back the sliding shutters that kept out the glare of the sun in the morning hours, and knew that she was gazing out over the tree-dotted lawn toward the gate where

the guard lounged through the warm afternoon. All of a sudden, quick and stirring, a bugle sounded over on the Calle Nueva, where the North Dakotas had a strong detachment. The call was repeated, and, army woman though she was, she did not recognize it. She could not remember ever having heard it before. Then up the street, from the Engineer barrack, there came thrilling echo, and there was a sound of movement and excitement along the dusty thoroughfare. She heard Nita calling her name, and then the child's quick, nervous step along the hallway toward the stairs. Then came a sudden stop, a gasping, wailing cry, and, springing from her bed and to the door, Margaret found her sister cowering before a tall, slender man in the rough dress and field equipment of a private soldier. With a little packet—letters, apparently—held forth in one hand, while the other grasped her wrist, Rollin Latrobe stood sternly gazing at the girl shrinking at his feet.

The tableau was over in another second. Springing up the broad marble stairs came Billy

Gray, the corporal of the guard at his heels, and Latrobe saw his danger in a flash. Throwing little Gray aside as he would a terrier, the young athlete whirled on the stalwart regular. There was the sound of a crashing blow, followed by a heavy fall. The corporal went rolling down the steps with Latrobe bounding over the tumbling form, and the next instant he had vaulted over the ledge of the open window on the lower floor, and vanished through the gateway to the beach. And now all along the Calle Real the bugles were sounding "To Arms!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THAT was a wild day in Manila. Far over near the Escolta somebody shot at a vagrant dog lapping water from a little pool under one of the many hydrants. The soldier police essayed an arrest; the culprit broke and ran; the guard fired; a lot of coolies, taking alarm, fled jabbering to the river side. The natives, looking for trouble any moment, rushed to their homes. Some soldiers on pass and unarmed tumbled over the tables and chairs in the Alhambra in their dash for the open street. A stampeded sergeant told a bugler to sound to arms, and in the twinkling of an eye the call was taken up from barrack to barrack, and the news went flashing out by wire to the extreme front. The shopkeepers hastily put up their shutters and bolted their doors. Cabs, carts, *quilez* and *carromattas*—even the

street cars—were instantly seized by the soldiery scattered all over town, and utilized to take them tearing back to join their regiments. In five minutes the business streets down town were deserted. Chinese cowered within their crowded huts. The natives, men and women, either hid within the shelter of their homes or fled to the sanctuary of the many churches. All over the great city the alarm spread like wildfire. The battalions formed under arms, those nearest the outer lines being marched at once to their positions in support, those nearer the walled city waiting for orders. Foreign residents took matters more coolly than did the Asiatic; German phlegm, English impassability and Yankee devil-may-carishness preventing a panic. But those who had families and owned or could hire carriages and launches were not slow in seeking for their households the refuge of the fleet of transports lying placidly at anchor in the bay, where Dewey's bluejackets shifted their quids, went coolly to their stations and, grouped about their guns, quietly awaiting further developments. In an

agony of fear Colonel Frost had bidden his driver to lash the ponies to a gallop and go like the wind to Malate; but the appearance of the long ranks of sturdy infantry resting on their arms and beginning to look bored, measurably reassured him before he reached his home. Once there, however, the sight of Nita, clinging hysterically to her sister and moaning on her bed was sufficient to determine his first move, which was to wire for his launch to come around to the bay shore and take them off to the fleet. The next was to send and ask for an officer and twenty men from the Cuartel, on receiving which message the major commanding, standing on the dusty roadway in front of his men, grinned under his grizzled mustache and said, "Frost's got 'em again. Here, Gray, you go over and tell him to keep his hair on, that it's nothing but a fake alarm." And Gray, glad enough of the chance to go again into the presence of the woman who so fascinated him, sped on his mission. He was in a fury over his recent humiliation in her very sight—he, a commissioned officer, tossed aside

like a child and outwitted by this daring intruder in the shape of a private soldier—he and his guard brushed away and derided by a young fellow in some strange regiment—who had easily escaped along the beach to an adjoining inclosure into which he darted and was no more seen. The streets were full of scurrying soldiers, and it was the simplest thing in the world for him to mingle with them and make his way to his own command. Of course, Gray well knew who the man must be—Nita's troublesome lover of whom Witchie had told him so much. There was his chance to recover the letters and claim the reward; but man and letters both had escaped his grasp; and when he pulled up, blown and exhausted after fruitless chase, he was brought to his senses by the sight of his own men falling in "for business," and he had to scamper for his sword and join them.

That was a miserable evening. Margaret Garrison was the only member of the household who seemed to have her wits about her and her nerves under control, for Frank, her liege lord,

had his duty elsewhere, and not until hours later trotted slowly home. Margaret plainly let Gray understand how he had fallen in her estimation at being so easily tossed aside. A warning finger was laid upon her lip. "Not one word of what has happened while he is here," she muttered; and a nod of her fluffy head toward the perturbed colonel told plainly that the chief of the household really had no place in the family councils. To the sisters that alarm was a blessing in disguise. It was all sufficient to account for Nita's prostration. To the rash and reckless lad, who, claiming to be an orderly with a letter from the colonel, had been passed by the gate guard to the open stairway, it afforded ample cover for escape, when, alarmed by Nita's cry, Gray and the corporal came springing to her aid. To Gray himself it gave only a few minutes' forgetfulness of his trouble, for, smarting under the sting of a woman's only half-hidden disdain, he would have welcomed with almost savage joy some fierce battle with a skillful foe, some scene in which he could compel her respect and ad-

miration. He was still smarting and stung when at last that opportunity came.

Long will Manila remember the night! It followed close upon the heels of warnings that for weeks held every officer and man to his post of duty. Day after day the strain increased. The Insurgents, crowding upon our outposts in front of Santa Mesa on the north and of Santa Ana on the south side of the Pasig, had heaped insult and threats upon our silent sentries, compelled by orders to the very last to submit to anything but actual attrack rather than bring on a battle. "The Americans are afraid," was the gleeful cry of Aguinaldo's officers, the jeer and taunt of his men. The regulars were soon to come and replace those volunteers, said the wiseacre of his cabinet, therefore strike now before the trained and disciplined troops arrive and sweep these big boors into the sea. And on the still, starlit night, sooner perhaps than his confederates within the walls intended, the rebel leader struck, and, long before the dawn of the lovely Sunday morn that followed, the fire flashed

from forty thousand rifles in big semicircle around Manila, and the long-expected battle was on.

Hours after dawn, hours after the attack began, the —teenth were in extended battle order to the south of Malate confronted by thickets of bamboo that fairly swarmed with Insurgents, yet, only by the incessant zip and "whiew" of their deadly missiles and the ceaseless crackle of rifle fire, could this be determined; for with their smokeless powder and their Indian-like skill in concealment nothing could be seen of their array. Over to the westward on the placid waters of the bay the huge Monadnock was driving shell after shell into the dense underbrush across the abandoned rice fields and the marshy flats that lined the shore. Over to the east resounding cheers and crashing volleys, punctuated by the sharp report of field guns, told that the comrade brigade was heavily engaged and, apparently, driving the enemy before them. To right and left their volunteer supports were banging into the brush with their heavy Springfields; and still there seemed no symptom of weakness

along the immediate front, no sign of yielding. If anything the fury of the Insurgent volleying increased as the sun climbed higher, and all along the blue-shirted line men grit their teeth and swore as they crouched or lay full length along the roadside, peering through the filmy veil that drifted slowly across their front—the smoke from the Springfields of the volunteers. To lie there longer with the bullets buzzing close overhead or biting deep into the low embankment, sometimes tearing a stinging path through human flesh and bone, was adding to the nerve strain of the hours gone by. To rush headlong across that intervening open space, through deep and muddy pools and stagnant ditch, and hurl themselves upon the lurking enemy in the bamboo copse beyond, had been the ardent longing of the line since daylight came to illumine the field before them. Yet stern orders withheld: Defend, but do not advance, said the General's message; and the whisper went along from man to man. "There is trouble in town behind us, and the chief may need us there."

But, as eight o'clock passed with no word of uprising in the rear, and the cheering over toward Santa Ana grew loud and louder, the nerve strain upon the —teenth became well-nigh intolerable. "For God's sake, can't we be doing something instead of lying here firing into a hornet's nest?" was the murmur that arose in more than one company along the impatient line; and the gruff voices of veteran sergeants could be heard ordering silence, while, moving up and down behind their men, the line officers cautioned against waste of ammunition and needless exposure. "Lie flat, men. Keep down!" were the words. "We won't have to stand this forever. You'll soon get your chance."

And presently it came. The cheering that had died away, far over to the left beyond the wooded knolls that surrounded Singalon and Block House 12, was suddenly taken up nearer at hand. Then crashing volleys sounded along the narrow roadway to the east, and a bugle rang out shrill and clear above the noise of battle; and then closer still, though unseen in

the gloom of the dense thicket in which they lay, the men of the second battalion, strung along a Filipino trail that led away to the rice fields, swung their big straw hats and yelled for joy. A young officer, his eyes flashing, his face flushing with excitement, came bounding out from the grove at the left of the crouching line and made straight to where the veteran battalion commander knelt in rear of his center. It was Billy Gray, adjutant of the third battalion, acting that day as adjutant to the regimental commander. The bullets whistled by his head as he darted springingly along; and in their joy at sight of him even old hands forgot the reserve of the regular service and some man shouted: "Now we're off!" and the popular query: "What's the matter with Lieutenant Gray?"

At any other time, under any other circumstances both questioner and respondents who gleefully shouted "He's all right," would have been promptly and sternly suppressed. But the senior captain at their head well knew the excitement tingling in the nerves of that long-

suffering line, and only smiled and nodded sympathy. He saw, too, that Gray was quivering with pent-up feeling, as the boy halted short, saluted, and, striving to steady his eager voice, said:

"Captain, the colonel directs that you open sharp fire on the woods in your front and occupy the enemy there. He is about to charge with the third battalion and drive them out of the trenches we've located over yonder;" and Billy pointed eagerly to the left front—the southeast.

The captain's grizzled face took on a look of keen disappointment. "You mean we've got to stay here, and see you fellows go in?"

"Only for a few minutes, sir. The colonel says that for you to charge before he's got onto their flank would cost too many men. You'll get the word as soon as he's got the works."

"Well said, Billy boy! That sounds almost epigrammatic. Hullo! You hit? Stoop down here, man. Don't try to get perforated."

"My hat only," was the answer, as the boy stooped quickly to hide the irrepressible twitch-

ing about the muscles of his lip. A Remington had ripped from side to side, tearing a way through the curly hair at the top of his head and almost scoring the scalp. To save his soul he could not quite suppress the trembling of his knees; but, steadying himself by great effort, he continued: "The colonel says to commence firing by volley the moment our bugles sound the charge. Now I must get back."

"All right, youngster. Tell the colonel I savey, and we'll do our level best—only, let us into it as quick as you can."

But Gray heard only the first part of the sentence. He was panting when he reached his placid, gray-mustached chief, and could only gasp out: "The captain understands, sir." And then the regimental commander simply turned to the battalion leader, standing silent at his left in a little clump of timber—another veteran captain grown gray as himself in long, long years of service:

"Now's our time, old man! Pitch in! Gray, we'll go with him."

All along the line from right to left there

ran the cross-country road connecting the broader highway, from Malate to San Rafael and Parañaque on the west, and from West Paco by way of Singalon to Pasay. In front of the right wing all was swamp, morass or rice fields. In front of the left wing all was close, dense bamboo and jungle, save where the broad, straight roadway led on past Block House 13, or the narrower cart track stretched southward, overarched in places by spreading branches, and commanded at its narrowest path by the swarm of dusky fighters in Block House 14. A year before the blue-shirts stormed these forest strongholds from the south, and took them from the troops of Spain. Now they were compelled to turn and storm them from the north; for, just as Stanley Armstrong said at San Francisco, the Filipinos had turned upon their ally and would-be friend. Aguinaldo had bearded Uncle Sam.

And while the volunteers and regulars to the right could only remain in support, it fell to the lot of the left wing of this brave brigade to assault in almost impenetrable position an

enemy armed with magazine rifles or breech-loaders, and entirely at home. The bugles rang the signal; the officers in silence took their stations, and, stepping into the narrow pathways through the jungle, crouching along the roadways or crashing through the stiff bamboo, the blue-shirts drove ahead. Two, three minutes, and their purpose seemed undiscovered. Then suddenly Block House 14 blazed with fire and a storm of bullets swept the road. The earthworks in the thickets to the right and left seemed to be crowded with a running flame; and down on their faces fell the foremost soldiers, their gallant leader shot through and through, plunging headlong, yet in his dying agony waving his surviving men to get to cover. Vengefully now the "Krags" opened in reply to Remington and Mauser. The blue-shirts struggled on inch by inch through the network of bamboo. Still the storm swept up the roadway, and no man could hope to face it and live. But, little by little, the low-aimed, steady volleys, driven in by squad and section through the canebreak, or by company and pla-

toon across the westward swamps, told on the nerve and discipline of the little brown men in the bamboo. Their shots flew swift, but wild and higher. Then a daring lad, in the rough field uniform of a subaltern of infantry, sprang like a cat into the fire-flashing lane, and, revolver in hand and a squad of devoted fellows at his heels, dashed straight at the wooden walls ahead. In frantic haste the occupants blazed shot after shot upon him and his heroic followers. One after another three went down; but, in another instant, the lieutenant leading, they reached the block house and darted through the open doorway, the last of its garrison fleeing in panic before such unheard-of-daring and determination. And then came the rush of comrades cheering down the lane, tumbling over the earthworks and the luckless gang that, still crouching there, held to their position, and all the southward leading road was ours.

But, over along the next lane, a parallel track through the timber, there had been as stern a check; and the fury of the fire from the

trenches in the thickets forced brave men to cover and dropped others in their tracks. "By God, we must have it!" almost screamed a tall captain, pointing with his sword to the flashing block house half hidden in the trees. "Hear those fellows on the other road? Don't let them beat us. Come on, lads!" and out he darted into the open, an instant target for a score of Mausers. Out, too, leaped half a dozen men, one a tall, lithe, superbly built young athlete, with a face aflame with resolution and rage of battle. Out leaped Billy Gray from the corner of the crossroad, and, cheering madly, called on others to follow. Down went the captain, shot through the knee. Down went the nearmost man, the tall youth who was first to follow. Down went a brawny sergeant, who had stopped to raise his fallen captain; but on swept a score of others while the bamboos blazed with the fierce volleying of the Krags. Forward in scores now, yelling like Apaches, rushed the regulars; and somehow, he never just knew how it happened, Gray found himself a moment later straddling an old field gun in a whirl of

dust and dirt and smoke and cheers, was conscious of something wet and warm streaming down his side, and of being tenderly lifted from his perch by brawny, blue-sleeved arms, given a sip from a canteen, and then, half-led, half-supported back to where the surgeon was already kneeling by the tall young soldier on whose brow the last dew was settling, on whose fine, clear-cut face the shadow of the death angel's wings was already traced. The poor fellow's eyes opened wearily as he sipped the stimulant pressed upon him by eager, sympathetic hands, and glanced slowly about as though in search of some familiar face; and so they fell on those of Billy Gray, who, forgetful for the moment of his own hurt, threw himself by the stranger's side and seized his clammy hand. A half smile flitted over the pale face, the other hand groped at the breast of his blue shirt and slowly drew forth a packet, stained and dripping with the blood that welled slowly from a shothole in the broad white breast. "Give to—General Drayton— Promise," he gasped, and pushed it painfully toward Billy

Gray. Then the brave eyes closed, the weary head fell back; and Gray, staring as though in stupefaction into the placid face, found himself drooping, too, growing dizzy and faint and reeling, but still holding on to his trust.

"Don't some of you know him?" asked the surgeon. "He's past helping now, poor lad. Here, you drink this, Billy;" and he placed a little silver cup at Gray's pallid lips.

"He came a-runnin' from over at Block House 12 with a note from division headquarters just as we went in," said a veteran sergeant, drawing the back of a powder-stained hand across his dripping forehead, then respectfully stepping back as a young officer bent down and glanced at Gray.

"Much hurt, Billy, old man? No? Thank God for that! Look at who? Where? Why, God of heaven, it's Pat Latrobe! Oh, Pat! Pat! dear old boy—has it come to this!"

CHAPTER XVII.

In the fortnight of incessant action that followed the mad attack of that starlit Sunday morning there was no place for Billy Gray. Sorely wounded, yet envied by many a fellow soldier for the glowing words in which the brigade commander praised his conduct and urged his brevet, the boy had been carried back to the great reserve hospital at Malate. The breezy wards were filled with sick or wounded, and certain of the rooms of the old convent once used for study and recitation had been set apart for officers. There were three cots in the one to which they bore him, and two were already occupied. Even in his pain and weakness he could hardly suppress a cry of dismay; for there, with his arm bandaged and in splints, his face white from loss of blood, his eyes closed in the sleep of utter exhaustion, lay Stanley Armstrong. Time and again the boy's heart

and conscience had rebuked him for the estrangement that had arisen between him and this man who had proved his best friend. Time and again he had promised himself that he would strive to win back that friendship; but well he knew that first he must reinstate himself in Armstrong's respect; and how could he hope for that so long as he surrendered to the fascinations that kept him dangling about the dainty skirts of Witchie Garrison? Oddly enough the boy had hardly bothered his head with any thought of what Frank Garrison might think of his attentions or devotions, whatever they could be called, to this very captivating and capricious helpmate. When a husband is so overwhelmed with other cares or considerations that he never sees his wife from morn till night, society seems to correspondingly lose sight of him. Down in the depths of his heart the boy was ashamed of himself. He never heard Armstrong mentioned that he did not wince. He knew and she knew that, coming suddenly upon them as Armstrong had that tropic night on the Queen, he must have heard

her words, must have realized that some compact or understanding existed between them, which neither Gray nor Mrs. Frank could palliate or explain. It had not needed that episode to tell her that Armstrong held her in contempt; and yet, when they chanced to meet, she could smile up into his eyes as beamingly, as guilelessly, as though no shadow of sin had ever darkened her winsome face. But not so Gray. He moaned in secret over the loss of a strong man's confidence and esteem. He longed to find a way to win it back. He had even thought to go to the colonel with his trouble, make a clean breast of it, tell him the truth—that he had fallen deeply, as it was possible for him to fall, in love with Amy Lawrence; had hoped his love was returned; had found it was not—that she had only a frank, friendly, kindly interest in him; and that, wounded and stung, he had fretted himself into a fever at Honolulu, aided by Canker's aspersions, and then—well—any man is liable, said Billy to himself, to get smitten with a woman who tenderly and skillfully nurses him day after day; and that's

just what Witchie Garrison did. But somehow the opportunity to tell him never seemed to come; and now, now that Armstrong and himself were thus thrown together with the prospect of being in the same room day and night for the best of the month, a third officer, a stranger, lay there, too, and in his presence or hearing any confidences would be impossible, even if Armstrong encouraged them, which he probably would not. In this embarrassment Billy's wish was that the colonel were fifty miles away. It was fate and a hard one, thought he, that brought him there—an ever-present reproach. It was luck of the worst kind that they should be confronted under such circumstances, since neither could retreat. He submitted in anxious silence to the keen, quick examination of the skillful surgeon in charge and to the re-dressing of his wound. He could have been proud and happy but for that shadow on his life, of which Armstrong's presence would so constantly remind him. He could not even think how his dear old dragoon daddy would rejoice in the congratulations that would surely

greet him when the story of the brave dash of the —teenth, Billy among the foremost, should reach the States. He could not even dream how it might affect her—Amy Lawrence. He was beginning to be ashamed now in this presence to think how that other—how Margaret Garrison might be impressed, forgetting that, to the army girl who has lived long years on the frontier, tales of heroism are the rule, not the exception. He wondered how long it could be before she would come to him to bring him comfort. Surely by this time she knew that he had been seriously, painfully wounded. He did not know, however, that at the very first sound of battle Frost had bundled the sisters aboard his launch and steamed away to the transports. Yet, what comfort could her visit bring to him with that stern censor lying there, seeing and hearing all? Billy Gray that Monday night could almost have wished that Armstrong's slumber might be eternal, never dreaming that before a second Monday should come he would thank Heaven with grateful heart for Armstrong's presence, vigilance and intervention.

In three days the colonel was able to sit up. Within the week he was permitted to take air and exercise in the spacious court of the old college, his sword arm in its sling. But Gray and the young officer of volunteers were too seriously wounded to leave their pillows. The —teenth had occupied a new line far south of the old one; but, one at a time, several of Billy's brother officers had dropped in to see him and tell him regimental news; and one of them, the young West Pointer who had broken down at sight of the dying face that stirring Sunday morning, told him of Latrobe's soldier funeral and of General Drayton's presence and speechless grief; and Billy's hand groped beneath the pillow for that little blood-stained packet still undelivered. He had promptly caused the information to be conveyed to the veteran commander that it was his own lost nephew who had died his soldier death in front of the firing line; but the packet still remained in his hands; and even before the tiny thermometer confirmed his views, the keen eye of the surgeon saw that something had heightened Billy's fever that

day; and so, when just at sunset there came driving into the court the most stylish equipage in all Manila, and Mrs. Garrison fluttered up the broad stairway and confidently asked to be announced to Mr. Gray, the steward in charge of the floor was very, very sorry, but—the doctor had given instructions that no more visitors should see the young gentleman that day. Mrs. Frank smiled indulgently, and asked for the doctor himself, and beamed on him with all her witchery and begged for just a few words; but the suave, placid, yet implacable doctor said he, too, was sorry—sorry that Mr. Gray was not able to see any one else, but such was the case. Mrs. Garrison said she thought if Mr. Gray knew that it was—but perhaps Dr. Frank didn't know it was she who had nursed Mr. Gray so assiduously at Honolulu. Dr. Frank did know that and more; but he did not say so; neither did he yield. There were tears in her eyes as she sprang into her carriage again; but they were tears of anger and defeat. She dashed them away the very next instant and smiled joy and congratulation, even adulation,

at sight of the tall, stalwart officer, his arm in a sling, who stood the center of a staring group as her carriage flashed by. She would have ordered stop; but while the rest of the party had gazed as they lifted their caps, Armstrong's uninjured hand performed its duty, his cap had been lifted with the others, but not so much as a glance went her way; and Margaret Garrison, bitter in spirit, drove on down past the old cuartel to her luxurious quarters where Nita, a piteous shadow of the "sweet girl graduate" of the year before, was awaiting her coming. With the Insurgents' retreat and the advance of the American lines there had been a gradual return of the refugees among the transports; and Frost had finally brought his birdling back to shore; but Nita dare not drive, she said, for fear of again seeing those stern, reproachful eyes. The guard at the gate had received orders to admit no more of the rank and file, even when they came as messengers; and so the child was safe, said Margaret. As for herself, she *must* drive, she *must* see Will Gray.

But the instant she re-entered the house Mrs.

Garrison knew that during her brief absence some new trouble had come. Good heavens, could she never leave Nita's side that harm did not befall her! At the head of the broad flight of stairs stood her brother-in-law, a black frown on his brow.

"Go in and do what you can for her," he briefly said. "I thought—she'd be glad to know that—that—fellow would trouble her no more."

"That fellow?" she gasped. "You mean——"

"I mean—Yes—Latrobe—killed and buried a whole week ago."

"And you told *her!*" she cried, clinching her little hands in impotent wrath. "You—brute!"

. . . . . .

Another week rolled by. The tide of battle had swept inland and northward; and all eyes were on the plucky advance of MacArthur's strong division, while far out to the south and east the thinned and depleted lines of Anderson held an insurgent force that forever menaced but dare not attack. The Primeval Dudes,

sorely missing their calmly energetic colonel, had drifted into a war of words with their nearest neighbors on the firing line, a far Western regiment gifted with great command of language and small regard for style. The latter had crowed mightily over their more rigorously disciplined comrades because of the compliments bestowed on them in an official report, wherein the Dudes received only honorable mention. It was Captain Stricker of the volunteers who had led the dash on the rebel works across the Tripa to the left of Blockhouse 12. It was their Sergeant Finney who whacked a Filipino major with the butt of his Springfield, and tumbled out of him the batch of reports and records that gave the numbers and positions of every unit of Pilar's division on the southward zone. It was their Corporal Norton who got the Mauser through the shoulder just as, foremost in the rush, he bayoneted the last Tagal at the Krupp guns in the river redoubt. It was his devoted bunky, Private Latrobe, who volunteered to carry the division commander's dispatch across the open

rice field and the yawning ditches that separated the staff from the rest of the charging —teenth, and who died gloriously in the rush on the rebel works. Man after man of the woolly Westerners had been referred to by name while, but the Dudes had nothing to show but their wounded colonel's modest report that "where every officer and man appeared to do his whole duty it would be unjust to make especial mention of even a limited few." The Dudes were getting hot over the taunts of the "Toughs," as some one had misnamed their neighbors; and one night when there was more or less interchange of pointed chaff in lieu of fight with a common foe, there was heard a shrill voice from the flank of the rifle pit nearest the Westerners, and what it said was repeated in wonderment over the brigade before the Dudes were another day older.

"Well, dash your thievin' gang! We made our record for ourselves anyhow. We didn't have to rely on any dashed deserters from the regulars—as you did."

And that was why Sergeant Sterne, of the

Dudes, was sent for by the field officers of both regiments the following morning and bidden to explain, which he did in few words. He was ready to swear that the wounded Corporal Norton was the very same young man he saw in the adjutant's office of the —teenth Regulars at Camp Merritt, and was then called Morton. And that evening the veteran sergeant major of the —teenth was bidden to report at the reserve hospital in Ermita, close to the Malate line, was conducted to the bedside of a pallid young soldier whose ticket bore the name of Norton, and was asked to tell whether he had ever seen him before.

"I have, sir," said the veteran, sadly and gravely. "He is a deserter from the —teenth. His name on our rolls was Morton." And that night Colonel Armstrong cabled to "Primate," New York, the single word "Found." Nor was it likely the lad would soon be lost again, for a sentry with fixed bayonet stood within ten feet of his bed with orders not to let him out of his sight a second.

Mrs. Garrison appeared at the hospital that

very evening and heard of the episode, and reached Billy Gray's bedside looking harassed, even haggard. During the past three days she had been accorded admission, for Gray was so much improved there was no reason to longer forbid; but on each occasion the wounded volunteer officer and the brace of attendants present had precluded all possibility of confidential talk. She must bide her time. Gray would be up in a few days, said the doctor; and then nothing would do, said Mrs. Garrison, but he must be moved to their big, roomy, lovely house on the bay side, and be made strong and well again—made to give up those letters, too, thought she; for she had wormed it out of a bystander that a packet of some kind had been given by the dying soldier to the lieutenant, and she well knew what it must be. She had even penned him a little note, since not a whisper could be safely exchanged, and headed it "Give this back to me the moment you have read it." In it she reminded him of his promise, and—did he need to be reminded of hers? She knew that packet of Nita's letters had been

intrusted to his care. She assured him she had it straight from the surgeon who attended both Latrobe and himself, and they must reach the hands of no man on earth, but must come to her. Would he not give them at once or tell her where she could find them?

He gave back the note, but closed his eyes and turned away. In the presence of Armstrong day after day, and in the recollection of Latrobe's dying face and the last parting touch of his stricken hand, Gray's eyes were opening to his own deplorable weakness. She plainly saw her power was going, if not gone. He had wrapped a silk handkerchief about the packet and still kept it, with his watch and purse beneath his pillow. He would not tell her where it lay. She smiled archly for the benefit of the attendant; but her eyes again eagerly claimed a look from his, her lips framed the word "tomorrow."

But neither on that morrow nor yet the next day came her opportunity. The gallant fellow who had lain there for days, dumb and patient, but a barrier to her plans, had taken a turn for

the worse, and she was again denied admission. Then came the tidings that the barrier was removed, the long fight was over; and the heartless woman actually rejoiced. Now at last she could talk to Will Gray; and when midnight came she knew that now at last she must, for Frank Garrison, worn and weary, returning late from the front, briefly announced that General Drayton purposed visiting the hospital the following afternoon, and long before noon —long before visiting hours, in fact, she was there with flowers as winsome as her smile, and some jelly as dainty as her own fair hands. She was there, and the instant the hour sounded was ushered in, and Billy Gray, propped on his pillows, was writing to his father, and alone. No time was to be lost. Any moment the attendant might return. She threw herself on her knees beside the homely, narrow cot, seized his hand in hers, and looked him in the face. "Where are they, Will?" she pleaded. "Quick! I must have them now!" But well she realized that the spell was broken—that the old fascination had died its death. Then it was use-

less to hint at love; and in a torrent of impassioned words she bade him think of all he owed her, appealed to his sense of gratitude and honor, and there, too, failed, for, admitting all she claimed, he clumsily, haltingly, yet honestly told her he saw now that it was all for an object, all done in the hope that he might become her instrument for the recovery of those compromising letters; and now that fate had delivered them into his hands he was bound by honor and his promise—unheard, unspoken perhaps, but all the same his promise—to the dead to give them to General Drayton.

Then rising in fury and denunciation, she played her last trump. Trembling from head to foot, pale with baffled purpose and with growing dread, she bent over him, both hands clinched.

"You mad fool!" she cried. "Do you know what I can do—will do—unless you give them to me here and now? As God hears me, Will Gray, I will give that other packet to General Drayton myself and swear that Colonel Canker was right—that you *were* the thief he thought you, and that I got those letters from you."

For a moment she stood there, menacing, at his bedside, looking down in almost malignant triumph on his amazed and incredulous face; and then, with an awful fear checking the beat of her heart and turning her veins to ice, she grasped at the flimsy framework that supported the netting over the cot, and stood swaying and staggering, her eyes fixed in terror on the man in the uniform of a colonel, who, quietly entering, stood between her and the door, two papers in his half-extended hand—a man whose voice, long and too well known, cut her to the very quick as she heard, in calm and measured tone the words:

"Mrs. Garrison, here are two reasons why you will do nothing of the kind. Shall I hand these to General Drayton—or to your husband?"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE long wait for the coming of the big transports with the regulars was over. For the first time in history America was sending her soldiery past the pyramids and through the Indian sea, landing them, after forty days and nights of voyaging, upon the low, flat shores that hem Manila Bay, and shoving them out to the hostile front before their sea-legs could reach the swing and stride of the marching step; yet, to all appearance, as unconcernedly at home as though they had been campaigning in the Philippines since the date of their enlistment. This, to be sure, in the case of more than half their number, would have given them scant time in which to look about them, since raw recruits were more numerous than seasoned men. But no matter what may be his lack of drill or preparation the average Anglo-Saxon never seems to know the time when he

doesn't know how to fight. So, with all the easy assurance of a veteran, our Yankee "Tommies" wriggled into their blanket rolls and trudged away to the posts assigned them; and once more the army assumed the aggressive.

There were changes in the composition of the forces even before the move began. The Dudes and the "Toughs" parted company; and the former, with Stanley Armstrong once more riding silent at their head, joined forces with Stewart's riddled regiment up the railway toward Malolos. Colonel Frost had succeeded in convincing the surgeons that he would be as out of place as his name itself in such a clime and climate, and was in daily expectation of an order home. Billy Gray, mending only slowly, had been sent to Corregidor, where the bracing breezes of the China Sea drove their tonic forces through his lungs and veins, and the faintly rising hue of coming health back into his hollow cheeks. The boy had been harder hit than seemed the case at first, said the fellows of the —teenth; but the wise young surgeon of the "Second Reserve"

and a grave-faced colonel of infantry could have told of causes little dreamed of in the regiment —were either given to telling the half of what he knew.

That something most unusual had occurred in the room of Mr. Gray the day that the sad-faced, kind old general visited the hospital at least half a dozen patients could have told; for an attendant went running for one of the women nurses, and the doctor himself hurried to the scene. It was on his arm that, half an hour later, Mrs. Garrison slowly descended the stairs, her flimsy white veil down, and silently bowed her thanks and adieux as the doctor closed the door of her carriage and nodded to the little coachman. It was the doctor who suggested to Colonel Frost that Manila air was not conducive to his wife's recovery, and recommended Nagasaki as the place for her recuperation until he could join her and take her home. The Esmeralda bore the White Sisters over Hongkong way within a week; and they left without flourish of trumpet, with hardly the flutter of a handkerchief; for, since the bat-

tle of the 5th of February, neither had been seen upon the Luneta. Their women friends were very few; the men they knew were mainly at the front. The story got out somehow that Garrison had asked to be relieved from further duty as aide-de-camp, and returned to duty with his regiment, and that Drayton would not have it. The General's manner toward that hard-working staff officer, though often preoccupied as of old, grew even kinder. He did not see the sisters off for China, he was "far too busy" was the explanation; but he offered Garrison a fortnight's leave, and urged his taking it, and was obviously troubled when Garrison declined. "You need rest and the change of air more than any man I know," said he; but Garrison replied that change of scene and air would not help him.

There were two young fellows in khaki uniforms landed from the hospital launch on the back trip from Corregidor one warm March day. One wore the badge of a subaltern of the —teenth Regulars, the other the chevrons of a corporal and the hatband of a famous fighting

regiment of volunteers; yet the same carriage bore them swiftly through the sentineled streets of the walled city, and the guards at the Ayuntamiento sprang to their arms and formed ranks at sight of it, then dispersed at the low-toned order of its commander when it was seen that, instead of stopping at the curb and discharging an elderly general officer, it whirled sraight by and held two youths in field uniform.

"One of 'em's young Gray, of the —teenth; he that was hit in the charge on the Pasay road," said the officer of the guard to a comrade. "But who the devil's the other? He had corporal's chevrons on. Some fellow just got a commission, perhaps." And that was the only way the soldier could account for a corporal riding with a commissioned officer in a general's carriage. They had a long whirl ahead of them, these two; and the corporal told Gray, as he already had the General and Colonel Armstrong, much of the story of his friendship for "Pat" Latrobe, of that poor fellow's illness at San Francisco, and all the trouble it cost his friend and chum. There was a strong bond

between them, he explained; and the blush of shame that stole up in the face of the narrator found instant answer in that of Billy Gray. Determined to see service at the front and not return to punishment in his regiment, never dreaming that, in quitting a corps doomed apparently to inaction at home, and joining one going straight to the enemy's country, he was committing the grave crime of desertion, "Gov." Prime had spoken to some men in Stewart's regiment and was bidden to come along and fetch his friend; for they were just as ignorant as he. Having still considerable money "Gov." had bought civilian clothes, and all the supplies they needed while about town, and hired a boat that rowed them, with certain items contraband of war, to the dark side of the transport as nightfall came; and they were easily smuggled aboard and into uniform, and then, during the few days' stay at Honolulu, were formally enlisted and no embarrassing questions asked.

And now poor Pat was gone and Prime's father had been cabling for him to return home;

but there was that awkward matter about the desertion. General Drayton was trying to have it straightened out at Washington; for he had been kindness itself the day of his visit to the hospital, where almost his first act had been to seek out the wounded young soldier who had been his beloved nephew's boon companion, and at one time sole support. The sentry was relieved of his surveillance, and Corporal Norton transferred to Corregidor to recuperate; and now that both lads were well on the road to recovery, Drayton had sent for them. Strictly speaking, some one should have seen to it that Corporal Norton of the Volunteers was shifted back to Private Norton of the —teenth, and the chevrons stripped from his sleeves; but no one had cared to interfere where the worsted was concerned, especially as the boy had won such praise for bravery at Concordia Bridge. So there the chevrons stood when the two were ushered into the presence of the gray-haired chief; and he arose, and stepping forward, held out a hand to each.

"I want you, boys," said he, "to be ready to

take the next transport home. The doctors say you need a sea voyage, Gray; so there is the order. The doctors say your father needs you, Prime; and the record will be duly straightened out in Washington—the charge of desertion, no doubt, will be removed. It's a matter of influence. To-night you dine with me here; and I have asked your good friend, Colonel Armstrong, to come."

Again the blood rose guiltily to Billy's cheek. Not yet had he made his peace with his conscience, and that valued counselor and invaluable friend from whose good graces he seemed to have fallen entirely. Not once had opportunity been afforded in which to speak and open his heart to him. As for writing, that seemed impossible. Billy could handle almost any implement better than a pen. But even in the few minutes left him in which to think he knew that now at least he must "face the music," like the man his father would have him be, even though it took more nerve than did that perilous dash on the Tagal works that Sunday morning. Billy would rather do that

twice over than have to face Armstrong's stern, searching eyes, and hear again the cold, almost contemptuous tone in which the colonel said to him the day the doctor led his vanquished and hysterical charmer from the room: "Don't try to thank, man, try to *think* what you risk—what you deserve to lose—for putting yourself in the power of such a woman."

From that day until this, here on the banks of the swift-running Pasig, they had not met at all; and it seemed to Gray as though Armstrong had aged a year. There was a lump in his throat as he went straight up to the colonel, his blue eyes never flinching, though they seemed to fill, and bravely spoke. "Colonel Armstrong, I have an explanation that I owe to you. Will you give me a few minutes on the gallery?"

"Certainly, Gray," was the calm reply; and the youngster led the way.

It was a broken story. It told of his desperation and misery through Canker's persecution, of his severe illness, then of the utter weakness and prostration; then *her* coming, and with her

comfort, peace, reassurance, gradual return to health, and with that, gradual surrender to his nurse's fascinations. Then her demand upon him, her plea, her final insistence that he should prove his gratitude and devotion by getting for her those dangerous letters, and his weakness in letting her believe he could and would do so. That was the situation when they went on to Manila; and Armstrong knew the rest—knew that but for his timely aid she might have triumphed over his repentance; but Armstrong had come, had vanquished her and poor Latrobe's last wishes were observed. The fateful packet containing the three letters that were most important was placed in his uncle's trembling hand.

"But how was it—what was it that so utterly crushed her?" asked Billy, when the colonel had once more extended his hand.

"The evidences of her own forgery, her own guilt," said Armstrong gravely. "One was the order she wrote in excellent imitation of her husband's hand and signature, authorizing the changing of guard arrangements on the

wharf the evening Stewart sailed. The other was a note in pencil, also purporting to come from him, directing old Keeny—you remember the General's Irish orderly—to search for a packet of letters that had come by mail, and must be in the general's tent, either about his desk or overcoat, and to bring them at once to room number so and so at the Palace. Of course, neither the General nor Garrison was there when he arrived with them; but she was, and with all her fascinations. She got the Irishman half drunk and told him a piteous story and made him swear he'd never tell the General or anybody. If questioned he could plead he had gone out, and—"got a little full with the boys." She gave him money—a big bit, too; and he got more than full. "The very vehemence of his denials made me suspect him," said Armstrong; "but he was firm when examined. The General never required him to remain at the tent at night. He could go to town any evening he wished; and to cover his appearing at the Palace where the General long had a room, and where he was well known, he

could say he was only in to have a word with one of the housemaids, and to give Mrs. Garrison a handkerchief one of the ladies must have dropped. But one thing she failed in—getting the letter back. Keeny had left it at camp in the pocket of his old blouse, and when he sobered up and all the questions were asked he hung onto it in case the truth came out, in order that he might save himself from punishment. But it broke him—he got to drinking oftener, and the General had to send him to his regiment; and then when we heard of Canker's charge against you I saw the way to wring the truth out of him. He worshiped your father, as did every Irish dragoon that ever rode under him; and I told him you were to be brought to trial for the crime. Then he broke down and gave the truth—and her penciled order—to me."

In the silence that followed the soldier of forty and the lad of only twenty-one sat looking gravely into each other's face. It was Armstrong who spoke again:

"Gray, it was manly in you to tell me your story and your trouble. I could help you here;

but—who can help you when you have to tell it—next time?"

"Next time?—father, do you mean?" queried Gray, a puzzled look in his blue eyes. "I hadn't thought, do you know, to worry dear old dad—unless he asked."

Armstrong's grave face grew dark: "You ought to know what I mean, Gray. This story may come up when least you think for, and—would you have it told Miss Lawrence before she hears it from you?"

"Miss Lawrence," answered Billy, flushing, "isn't in the least interested."

"Do you mean that you are not—that you were not engaged to her?" The colonel had been gazing out over the swirling river; but now, with curious contraction of brows, with a strong light in his eyes, he had turned full on the young officer.

"Engaged to her! Do you suppose I could have been—been such an ass if *she* would have had me? No! She—she had too much sense."

It was full a minute before Armstrong spoke again. For a few seconds he sat motionless,

gazing steadily into Gray's handsome, blushing face; then he turned once more and looked out over the Pasig and the scarred level of the rice fields beyond. And the long slant of the sunshine on distant towers and neighboring roofs and copse and wall, and the unlovely landscape seemed all tinged with purple haze and tipped with gold. The blare of a bugle summoning the men to supper seemed softened by distance, or some new, strange intonation, and gave to the ugliest of all our service calls the effect of soft, sweet melody; and there was sympathy and genuine feeling in the deep voice as he once again held out his hand to Billy.

"Forgive me, lad, for I judged you more harshly than you deserved."

One lovely, summer-like evening, some five weeks later, in long, heaving surges the deep blue waves of the Pacific came lazily rolling toward the palm-bordered beach at Waikiki, bursting into snowy foam on the pebbly strand, and, softly hissing, swept like fleecy mantle up the slope of wet, hard-beaten sand, then broke, lapping and whirling, about the stone supports

of the broad *lanai* of one of the many luxurious homes that dot the curving line of the bay to the east of Honolulu. Dimly outlined in the fairy moonlight, the shadowy mountains of the Waianai Range lay low upon the western horizon. Eastward the bare, bold volcanic upheaval of Diamond Head gleamed in bold relief, reflecting the silver rays. Here and there through the foliage shone the soft-colored fires of Chinese lanterns, and farther away, along the concave shore, distant electric lights twinkled like answering signals to the stars in the vault of blue, and the "riding lights" of the few transports or warships, swinging at anchor on the tide.

From a little grove of palms close to the low sea wall came the soft tinkle of guitar, and now and then a burst of joyous song, while under the spreading roof of the broad portico or *lanai*, the murmur of voices, the occasional ripple of musical laughter, the floating haze of cigarette smoke, told where a party of worshipers were gathered, rejoicing in the loveliness of nature and the night.

It was a reunited party, too, and in the welcome of their winsome hostess, in the soft, soothing influence of that summer clime, and through the healing tonic of the long sea voyage, faces that had been saddened by deep anxiety but a few weeks gone, smiled gladness into one another now. A tall, gray-haired man reclined in an easy lounging chair, his eyes intent on the clear-cut face of a young soldier in trim white uniform who, with much animation, was telling of an event in the recent campaign. By his side, her humid eyes following his every gesture, sat a tall, dark, stylish girl, whose hand from time to time crept forth to caress his—an evident case of sister worship. Close at hand another young fellow, in spotless white, his curly head bent far forward, his elbows on his knees, his fingertips joining, was studying silently the effect of his comrade's story on another—a fair girl whose sweet face, serene and composed, was fully illumined by the silvery light of the unclouded moon. "Coming by transport, via Honolulu"—"Gov.'s" cabled message had brought father and sister to meet

him at these famed "Cross-roads of the Pacific," and whither they journeyed Amy Lawrence, too, must go, said they; and, glad of opportunity to see the land of perennial bloom and sunshine, and wearied with long, long months of labor in the service of the Red Cross, the girl had willingly accepted their invitation. Coaled and provisioned the transport had pushed on for the seven-day run for San Francisco; but the recovering of his long-lost son and the soft, reposeful atmosphere of the lovely, yet isolated island group, had so benefited Mr. Prime that in family council it had been decided wise for them to spend a week or ten days longer at the Royal Hawaiian; and the boys had found no difficulty in "holding over" for the Sedgwick that followed swift upon the heels of their own ship. Five joyous days had they together, and this, the fifth, had been spent in sightseeing beyond the lofty Pali of the northward side. The "O. & O." liner was coming in from Yokohama even as they drove away; and as they sat at dinner on the open *lanai*, long hours later, it had been mentioned by their host that

the Sedgwick, too, had reached the harbor during the afternoon, and that army people were passengers on both liner and transport. Billy Gray, for one, began to wish that dinner were over. He was eager to get the latest news from the Philippines, and the Sedgwick left Manila full a week behind their slower craft.

"Did you hear who came with her?" he somewhat eagerly asked, "or on the Doric?" he continued, with less enthusiasm.

"I did not," was the answer—"that is, on the Sedgwick;" and the gentleman halted lamely and glanced furtively and appealingly at his wife. There was that embarrassing, interrogative silence that makes one feel the futility of concealment. It was Miss Lawrence who quickly came to his relief and dispelled the strain on the situation.

"I should fancy very few army people would choose that roundabout way from Manila when they can come direct by transport, and have the ship to themselves."

"Well—er—yes; certainly, certainly," answered the helpless master of the house, dodg-

ing now the warning and reproach in the eyes of his wiser mate at the other end of the table. The crack of a coachman's whip and the swift beat of trotting hoofs on the graveled road in front could be heard as he faltered on. The gleam of cab lights came floating through the northward shrubbery. "Except, of course, when they happen to be—er—already, well, you know, at Hongkong or Nagasaki," he lamely concluded.

There was an instant hurried glance exchanged between Gray and Prime. Then up spoke in silvery tone their hostess:

"Other officers, you know, are ordered home. We have just heard to-day that Colonel Frost comes very soon. His health seems quite shattered. I believe—you knew—of them—slightly that is to say, Miss Prime, did you not?" But even with her words she cast an anxious, furtive glance along the dim reach of the *lanai*, for the pit-a-pat of footfalls, the swish of feminine draperies was distinctly heard. Two dainty, white-robed forms came floating into view, and, with changing color, their hostess suddenly

arose and stepped forward to meet them. Just one second of silence intervened, then, all grace and gladness, smiles and cordiality, poth her little hands outstretched, Mrs. Frank Garrison came dancing into their midst, her sister more timidly following.

"*Dear* Mrs. Marsden, how perfectly (kiss, kiss) delicious! Yes, this is the baby sister I've raved to you about. We go right on with the Doric; but I *had* to bring her out with me that you might have just one glance at her. Why! Mr. Prime! Why, what could be more charming than to find you here? And 'Gov.' *too*—you wicked boy! What won't I do to you for never telling me you were in Manila? And Mildred!" (kiss—kiss, despite a palpable dodge and heightened color on part of the half-dazed recipient). "And you, too, Miss Lawrence?" (Both hands, but no kiss—one hand calmly accepted). "Ah, then I know how happy *you* are, Mr. Willie Gray!" (beaming arch smiles upon that flushed and flustered young officer. Then, turning again to twine a jeweled arm about the slim waist of their hostess, to whom she

clung as though defying any effort to dislodge, yet pleading for protection): "Who on earth could have foretold that we of all people should have met out here—of all places? How long did you say you had been here? A week? And of course, dear Mrs. Marsden has done everything to make it lovely for you. *I* should have *died* without her." And so the swift play of words went on, the rapid fire of her fluent tongue covering the movement of her allies and drowning all possibility of reply. It was an odd and trying moment. Mrs. Marsden, well knowing, as who in Honolulu did not, of Mrs. Frank's devotion to the young lieutenant, barely six months agone, was striving to welcome the shrinking little scare-faced thing that blindly and helplessly had drifted in in the elder sister's wake. The introductions that followed, after the American fashion, were as perfunctory as well-bred women can permit. The greetings were almost solemn, smileless, and, on part of Nita, fluttering to the verge of a faint; and nothing but Witchie's plucky and persistent support, and the light flow of airy

chat and laughter, carried her through the ordeal. The two young soldiers stood stiffly back, red-faced and black-browed; the father, pallid and cold, could hardly force himself to unbend, yet his lips mumbled the name "Mrs. Frost," as he bowed at presentation; Miss Prime stood erect and trembling; Miss Lawrence, with brave eyes but heightened color. To leave at once was impossible; to remain was more than embarrassment. Most gallantly did they battle, Mrs. Marsden and Mrs. Frank, to lift the wet blanket from the group and relieve the strain. Reward came to crown their efforts in strange, unlooked-for fashion. Hoofs, wheels and flashing lights were again at the entrance gate, even as Mrs. Frank, sparkling with animation, distributing her gay good humor over the silent semicircle, suddenly exclaimed: "Oh, if I'd *only* known you were here, I could have provided the one thing to make our reunion complete! If we were not going on at daybreak I should do it yet." Then hoofs and wheels and lights had come to a stop at the front of the house, and in measured, martial tread a man's

footsteps were heard upon the *lanai*. Then, all of a sudden, with a cry of joy, Witchie burst in again: "*Should* do it?—I shall do it! Said I not I was the fairy queen? Behold me summon my subjects from the ends of the obedient earth!" And, waving her parasol as she would a wand, gayly pirouetting as she had that night in the tent at old Camp Merritt, she danced forward: "Sound ye the trumpets, slaves! Hail to the chief! See the conquering hero comes! Enter Brevet Brigadier-General Stanley Armstrong!—though his arm is anything but strong."

Bowing gravely to the sprite in front of him, vaguely to the group in the shaded light at the edge of the *lanai*, and joyously to the little hostess, as almost hysterically she sprang forward and clasped his hands, the colonel of the Primeval Dudes stood revealed before them.

"*Colonel* Armstrong! How—when did you get here? What does this mean? Is your arm quite well again? Why *didn't* you let us know you were coming?" were the questions rained upon him by Mrs. Marsden, immediately fol-

lowed by the somewhat illogical statement that she was actually breathless with surprise.

"Shall I answer in their order?" said he, smiling down at her flushed and joyous face. "By the Sedgwick. This afternoon. That I wished to see you. Doing quite well. Because I didn't know myself until two days before we sailed." Then, as he stood peering beyond her, she would have turned him to her other guests had not Mrs. Garrison made instant and impulsive rush upon him.

"As fairy queen or fairy godmother I claim first speech," she gayly cried. "What tidings of my liege lord, and where is hers, my fairy sister's?" she demanded, waving in front of him her filmy parasol and pirouetting with almost girlish grace.

"Captain Garrison was looking fairly well the day I sailed," he answered briefly; "and Colonel Frost left for Hongkong only a few hours before in hopes, as we understood, of finding Mrs. Frost at Yokohama. Permit me," he added, with grave courtesy. "I have but little time as I transfer to the Doric to-night."

A shade spread over the radiant face one instant, but was as quickly swept away. "And I have not met your guests," he finished, turning to Mrs. Marsden, as he spoke, and quietly passing Mrs. Garrison in so doing. The next moment he was shaking hands with the entire party, coming last of all to Amy Lawrence.

"They told me of your being here," he said, looking straight into her clear, beautiful eyes; "and I thought I might find you at Mrs. Marsden's. She was our best friend when we were in Honolulu. They told me, too, that you desired to go by the Doric, but feared she would be crowded," he continued, turning to Mr. Prime. "There is one vacant stateroom now; its occupants have decided to stay over and visit the islands. There will be, I think, another." And drawing a letter from an inner pocket he calmly turned to Nita, now shrinking almost fearfully behind her sister. "The colonel gave this to me to hand to you, Mrs. Frost, on the chance of your being here. He will arrive by next week's steamer, and, pardon me, it is something I think you should see at

once as a change in your plans may be necessary."

It was vain for Margaret to interpose. The letter was safely lodged in her sister's hands, and with so significant a message that it had to be opened and read without delay. Gayly excusing herself, and with a low reverence and comprehensive smile to the assembled party, she ushered her sister into the long parlor, and the curtain fell behind them. There followed a few minutes of brisk conference upon the *lanai*, the Marsdens pleading against, the father and daughter for, immediate return to the hotel, there to claim the vacated rooms aboard the steamer. In the eager discussion, pro and con, both young soldiers joined, both saying "go," and promising to follow by the Sedgwick. In this family council, despite the vivid interest Armstrong felt in the result, neither Amy Lawrence nor himself took any part. Side by side at the snowy railing over the breaking sea they stood almost silent listeners. Suddenly there came from the front again the sound of hoofs and wheels, loud and distinct at

the start, then rapidly dying away with the increasing distance. Miss Lawrence turned and looked inquiringly into the eyes she well knew were fixed upon her. Mrs. Marsden hesitated one moment, then stepped across the *lanai*, peered into the parlor and entered. It was a minute before she returned, and in that minute the decisive vote was cast, the carriage ordered.

"Oh, I ought to have known how it would be if I left you a moment!" she cried despairingly, on her reappearance, a little folded paper in her hand. "But at least you must stay half an hour. We can telephone direct to the dock and secure the staterooms, if go you must on the Doric. Yes," she continued, lowering her voice, "they are not going farther until Colonel Frost comes. Mrs. Garrison explains that her sister was really too ill and too weak to come out here, but she thought the drive might do her good. She thought best to slip quietly away with her, and bids me say good-night to you all."

So, when next day the Doric sailed, four new

names appeared upon the passenger list, and the last men down the stage already "trembling on the rise," were two young fellows in white uniform, who turned as they sprang to the dock and waved their jaunty caps. "Join you in ten days at 'Frisco!" shouted the shorter of the two, gazing upward and backward at the quartette on the promenade deck. "Oh! beg a thousand pardons," he added hastily, as he bumped against some slender object, and, wheeling about to pick up a flimsy white fan, he found himself face to face with Witchie Garrison, kerchief waving, beaming, smiling, throwing kisses innumerable to the party he had so lately left. The hot blood rushed to his forehead, an angry light to his eyes, as she nodded blithely, forbearingly, forgivingly at him. "Dear boy," she cried, in her clear, penetrating treble, "how could you be expected to see any one after leaving—her?" But Gov.'s arm was linked in his at the very instant and led him glowering away, leaving her close to the edge of the crowded dock, smiling sweetness, blessing and bliss upon a silent

and unresponsive group, and waving kerchief and kisses to them until, far from shore, the Doric headed out to sea.

. . . . . .

They were nearing home again. Day and night for nearly a week the good ship had borne them steadily onward over a sea of deepest blue, calm and unruffled as the light that shone in Amy's eyes. Hours of each twenty-four Armstrong had been the constant companion, at first of the trio, then of the two—for Mr. Prime had found a kindred spirit in a veteran merchant homeward bound from China—then of one alone; for Miss Prime had found another interest, and favor in the eyes of a young tourist paying his first visit to our shores, and so it happened that before the voyage, all too brief, was half over, Amy Lawrence and Armstrong walked the spacious deck for hours alone or sat in sheltered nooks, gazing out upon the sea. The soft, summer breezes of the first few days had given place to keener, chillier air. The fog ahead told of the close proximity of the Farallones. Heavier wraps had replaced the soft

fabrics of the Hawaiian saunterings. But warmth and gladness, coupled with a strange new shyness in his presence, were glowing in her fresh young heart. One day she had said to him: "You have not told me how you came to leave there—just now," and it was a moment before he answered.

"That was the surgeons' doing. They sent me back from the front because the wound did not properly heal, and then ordered a sea voyage until it did; but I turn back at once from San Francisco."

She was silent a few seconds. This was unlooked for and unwelcome news. "I thought," she said, "at least Gov. heard Dr. Frank say it would be four months before you could use that arm." She plucked at the fringe of the heavy shawl he had wrapped about her as she reclined in the low steamer chair; but the white lids veiled her eyes.

"Possibly," answered Armstrong; "but you see I do not have to use it much at any time. I'm all right otherwise, and there will soon be need of me."

"More campaigning?" she anxiously inquired, her eyes one moment uplifting.

"Probably. Those fellows have no idea of quitting."

Another interval of silence. The long, lazy, rolling swell of the Pacific had changed during the day to an abrupt and tumultuous upheaval that tossed the Doric like a cork and made locomotion a problem. The rising wind and sea sent the spray whirling from her bows, and Mildred's young man, casting about for a dry corner, had deposited his fair charge on a bench along the forward deck house and was scouting up and down for steamer chairs. Armstrong had drawn his close to that in which Miss Lawrence reclined, her knitted steamer cap pulled well forward over her brow. His feet were braced against a stanchion. His eyes were intent upon her sweet face. He had no thought for other men, even those in similar plight. His gaze, though unhampered by the high peak of his forage cap, comprehended nothing beyond the rounded outline of that soft cheek. Her eyes, well-nigh hidden by her shrouding

"Tam," saw the searching son of Albion and told her his need. The best of women will find excuse for interruption at such moments when sure of the devotion of the man who sits with a fateful question quivering on his lips; and, even when she longs to hear those very words, will find means to defer them as a kitten dallies with a captured mouse or a child saves to the very last the sweetest morsel of her birthday cake. Not ten minutes before, when the Honorable Bertie Shafto had started impulsively toward the vacant chair by Armstrong's side, a firm hand detained him, and Miss Prime had hastily interposed. "Not on any account!" said she, imperiously. "Can't you see?" And Mr. Shafto, adjusting his monocle, had gazed long and fixedly, and then, transferring his gaze to her, had said:

"Eh—eh—yes. It's not ours, I suppose you mean."

But now Amy Lawrence was beckoning, and he made a rush for the rail, then worked his way aft, hand over hand. Every movable on deck was taking a sudden slant to starboard,

and the sea went hissing by almost on level with the deck as next she spoke. "Surely a soldier needs both arms in battle, and you—Oh, certainly, Mr. Shafto, take that chair," she added. Armstrong glanced up suddenly.

"Oh! that you, Shafto? Yes; take it by all means."

Anything, thought he, rather than that they should come here. The young Briton stepped easily past between them and the rail—behind there was no room—and, swinging the long, awkwardly modeled fabric to his broad shoulder, started back just as a huge wave heaved suddenly under the counter, heeled the steamer far over to port, threw him off his balance, and, his foot catching at the bottom of her chair, hurled him, load and all, straight at Amy's reclining form. One instant, and even her uplifted hands could not have saved her face; but in that instant Armstrong had darted in, caught the stumbling Briton on one arm, and the full force of the shooting chair crashing upon the other, already pierced by Filipino lead.

When, a moment later she emerged, safe and unscratched from the confused heap of men and furniture, it was to cut off instantly the stutter and stammer of poor Shafto's apologies, to bid him go instantly for the ship's doctor, and, with face the color of death, to turn quickly to Armstrong. The blow had burst open the half-healed wound, and the blood was streaming to the deck.

. . . . . .

Both liner and transport turned back without Stanley Armstrong, Doric and Sedgwick sailed unheeded, for the highest surgical authority of the Department of California had remanded him to quarters at the Palace and forbidden his return to duty with an unhealed wound. He was sitting up again, somewhat pallid and not too strong, but with every promise, said the "medico," of complete recovery within two months. But not a month would Armstrong wait. The Puebla was to start within the week, and he had made up his mind. Go," said he, "I must."

They had been sitting about him, the night

this opinion was announced, in the parlor of the suite of rooms the Primes had taken. Billy Gray had gone with his father to the club, Shafto had been hanging about in the agonies of an Englishman's first love, Gov. disappeared a moment and came back with tickets for the Columbia, bidding Mildred get her hat and gloves at once, and whispering Shafto that he had a seat for him. As the little mantel clock struck eight Amy Lawrence, lifting up her eyes from the book she was trying hard to believe she meant to read, saw that Armstrong was rising from his easy-chair, and, springing to his side, laying her white hand on his arm, she faltered, "Oh, please! You know the stipulation was that you were not to stir."

But then her heart began to flutter uncontrollably. The blood went surging to her brows, for all of a sudden, as through impulse irresistible, her hand was seized in his—in both of his, in fact—and the deep voice that had pleaded at her behest for the cause of Billy Gray was now, in impetuous flow of words that fell upon her ears like some strain of thrilling

music, pleading at last his own. Ever since that day in the radiant sunshine of the Park she had learned to look up to him as a tower of strength, a man of mark among his fellows, a man to be honored and obeyed. Ever since that night at the Palace, when she saw his glowing eyes fixed intently upon her, and knew that he was following her every move, she had begun to realize the depth of his interest in her. Ever since that day when the China slipped from her moorings, with Witchie Garrison singling him out for lavish farewell favors, she had wondered why it so annoyed and stung her. Ever since the day she read the list of killed and wounded in the first fierce battling with the "Insurrectos" she knew it was the sight of his name, not Billy Gray's, that made her for the moment faint and dizzy, and taught her the need of greater self-control. Ever since that moonlit night upon the Marsden's *lanai*, when her heart leaped at the sudden sound of his voice, she had realized what his coming meant to her, and ever since that breezy day upon the broad Pacific, with

the sailor's song of "Land ho!" ringing from the bows, and he, her wounded soldier, had sprung to shield her from the crash of Shafto's hapless stumble, and the deck was stained with the precious blood from that soldier's reopened wound, shed for her—for her who so revered him—she had longed to hear him say the words that alone could unlock the gates of maidenly reserve and let her tell him—tell him with glad and grateful heart that the love he bore her was answered by her own. Hovering over him only one minute, her lips half parted, her eyes still veiled, her heart throbbing loud and fast, with sudden movement she threw herself upon her knees at the side of the low chair, and her burning face, ever so lightly, was buried in the dark-blue sleeve above that blessed wound.

THE END.

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